

PEOPLE

UPDATE

Taxi drivers head aggression league

JUST ASKED



"I have had minor problems in the past but certainly nothing like this," he said. "It is my hobby and when I get better I will certainly do it again."

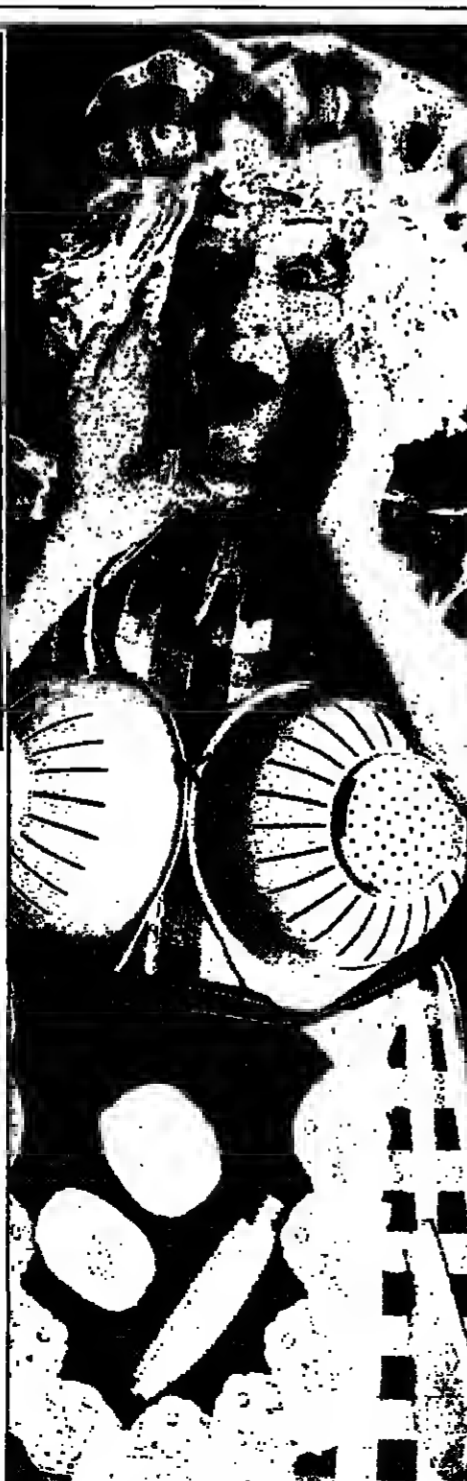
— Steve Boggan

Carlyle, a Partick Thistle football supporter, was also asked about the plight of his favourite club who are in the midst of a financial crisis. "I love Thistle, they are a great wee club. Clubs the size of Celtic and Rangers should help out. The fact Paul Gascoigne's wages for a week could pay the staff there for a year is a disgrace."

People keep playing through fear that their numbers will come up when they have missed a go or changed their numbers. Pam Briggs and Sandra Wolfson, from the University of Northumbria, found in their recent study of lottery players. The psychologists state that "anticipatory regret" – imagining the potentially negative consequences of changing behaviour – provides more motivation than excitement at the prospect of a potential win in buying lottery tickets. Even for those who buy a ticket, pessimism is rife. The study found that many dream of winning in the future, but few think a win is likely in the foreseeable future.

Source: Thomas Coal
Rates for indication purposes only

Leading stories	3	Features	15
Health news	5	Leader, letters	16
In the courts	7	Comment	17
Politics	8.9	Obituaries	18
World news	10	Business	19-23
Rwanda's crisis	11	Sport	24-28
Despatches	12	Crossword	The Eye, 9
Health	13	Weather	The Eye, 10
Visual arts	14	TV & radio	The Eye, 11, 12



SCRUB! SCRUB! SCRUB!

SPLOOSH

NEXT TIME JUST HAND ME AN APRON, OKAY, MOM?

FOR PEEPS SAKE, ALL I DID WAS NET MY FINGER AND WIFE SOME PIZZA SAUCE OFF YOUR FACE

JEFF KOPP '84
 © 1985 JEFF KOPP
 Other 274 Pictures Contributed by Jeff Kopp

IT WAS SO WEIRD SEEING FLARES COME BACK.... AND PLATFORM SHOES FOR GOODNESS SAKE

I SUPPOSE YOU'VE SEEN IT ALL IN YOUR TIME, BEN....

I DON'T TAKE A LOT OF INTEREST, TO BE HONEST PENNY. WHEN I WAS YOUNG FLARES WERE SIMPLY A KIND OF DISTRESS SIGNAL

WHICH, COME TO THINK OF IT, MAYBE THEY STILL ARE

CHRIS PRIESTLEY

Why dear

the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, led to a significant increase in people seeking help for depression, according to psychiatric clinics. Admissions fell by up to 50 per cent in some areas. One explanation, says Gordon, is that the public has been helped to come to terms with its problems.

Search for GR

the car crashed into the
top of Greenland Pass
about 11 miles from the
border. The car was
filled with snow and
the driver was killed.
The driver was a
Korean Editor, investigative
journalist.

Pepys goes to

15 DECEMBER

Why death of Diana was good for our health

The death of Diana, Princess of Wales, led to a significant decrease in people seeking help for depression, according to psychiatric clinics. Admissions fell by up to 50 per cent in some cases. One explanation says Glendo Cooper, Social Affairs Correspondent, is that the public mourning helped people come to terms with private problems.

The outpouring of grief after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales allowed people to release deeply-buried emotions relating to personal problems they had chosen

not to deal with, psychiatric experts said yesterday.

A survey carried out by Speciality Care, a nationwide group of private clinics which also takes NHS referrals, reported a drop in admissions for a range of general psychiatric illnesses. In some cases there was a drop of 50 per cent.

Drops were most commonly seen in those suffering neurotic problems such as anxiety and stress, rather than the severely psychotic patients. Clinics in London, where there are more mental health patients, also reported a "lull" in referrals.

"The death of Diana acted as a catharsis," said Dianne Trueman, clinical manager of Sutton's Manor Clinic in Essex. "When they cried for Diana, many people - and particularly men who often have trouble

expressing emotions - found they could also cry for themselves allowing the release of all the repressed emotions that had built up in their life. The long-term effect of such behaviour can often lead to the development of mental health problems."

At one point in her clinic, which takes NHS referrals, she had filled only 12 out of 27 beds. "It is unprecedented," she said. Other factors also played a part the experts found: the windfall gains from building societies, the election and the late onset of winter all helped to create a "feelgood" factor.

"There's significant benefit from a good old cry and the death of Diana gave people the licence to do just that," said Haydn Lunn, manager of the Dove Clinic in the Midlands.

Dr Stephen Palmer, director of the Centre for Stress Management, said he too had noticed a "lull" in admissions, although it was impossible to say whether this had been caused by Diana's death. "When there are big events you find there is less depression. They act as a wonderful distraction ... there were so many people who were upset who would not be normally because they were grieving for themselves. It was therapeutic without the need for therapy. This trend could be very interesting."

And Cosmo Hallstrom, a member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists' public education committee, said he also had seen a "dramatic reduction" in admissions at the Charter Clinic in Chelsea, although he also said that this could not be put down solely to Diana. "We are very sensitive to fluctuations in the NHS ... but personally I think it is more likely to affect people at the milder end of depression. I don't think it would have any effect on the serious cases of psychosis." He said that admissions were now beginning to rise again three months on from her death.

"Many found themselves overwhelmed both by her loss and by the feelings it revived from their past and present lives," said Professor Janet Sayers, who contributed to a special edition of *The Psychologist* which looked at reactions to Diana's death. "The nation's reaction ... has signalled even more strongly a change of heart - towards recognising our community with one another and the importance ... of being open to, voicing and sharing our feelings as she did with us."



Star trell Julia Ormond in *Smilla's Feeling for Snow*, the film from a book in which a meteor hits Greenland; and a case of life imitating art following the events of last week

Still: 20th Century Fox

Search for Greenland's fallen meteor

A dense meteor crashed into the southern tip of Greenland last week. The hunt for it goes on, but it would take someone with Miss Smilla's feeling for snow to find it. This, however, is real life. *Charles Arthur*, Science Editor, investigates another narrow escape.

Two spotter planes were yesterday searching the southern tip of Greenland for the telltale signs of the huge meteorite impact that happened last week, but of which news has only just begun to trickle out.

The size of the meteorite, which lit up the dark morning sky on 9 December, could rival that of the Tunguska meteorite, a body 50 to 100 metres across, which exploded in the air over Siberia in June 1908. The energy released was equivalent to a 15-megatonne bomb, and flattened trees across hundreds of square kilometres. Such events happen only a couple of times a century.

Fishermen and early morning risers saw the sky brighten to daylight at 5.10am, as what eyewitnesses called a green streak flashed across the sky in a period estimated between 2 and 5 seconds. No one was able to photograph it - though in the town of Nuuk a car-park video surveillance camera aimed at the ground did record the incredible brightening of ambient light.

Seconds later, seismographic equipment recorded a 10-second shockwave.

"It was seen all over the southern part of Greenland," Holger Pedersen, of Copenhagen University, told *The Independent* yesterday. "It wasn't like most meteor falls, which break up about 20 to 30km up and take a couple of minutes to reach the ground. This was travelling really fast and

stayed solid." But he said it was impossible at present to estimate the size of the Qaortoq meteorite - named, by tradition, from the nearest post office. The early signs are that the meteorite was travelling at about Mach 10 - 7,600mph. Had it hit a major city the effect would have been disastrous.

On landing it would be incredibly hot, and melt its way through the icecap - which would then freeze over it, hiding it, though a cloud of water vapour could be let off.

If the description sounds familiar, that's because a hurried meteorite in Greenland is one of the essential plot elements in Peter Hoeg's hugely popular book *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow*, recently made into a film.

But this was not a publicity stunt, and the lessons from this event may be worrying. There are an estimated 100,000 objects bigger than a kilometre wide floating around the solar system close enough to pose a threat to Earth.

Mr Pepys goes to court against Grub Street

Monday, 15 December, London

8.30am. Am off to Royal Courts of Justice, for the opening of my case against that dreary rag, the London *Evening Standard*, which has been running a limp parody of my own sharp and beautifully-judged diary, under the byline of a low, backing fellow called Peter Bradshaw. My case hinges on convincing people that this nonsense, appearing under my photograph, could be misread as my own work. I wonder how the rest of the Press will report the case. Hope no other ghastly scribbles think it amusing to parody the parody. I cut a dashing figure in my Savile Row suit. Expecting a tedious day. I cheer myself up by taking the Jag to 97mph in The Strand, scattering a group of office workers on a zebra crossing. 10am: Arrive at the High Court, a rather "nouveau" building nothing like as grand as my own beloved Saltwood Castle. Meet Geoffrey Hobbs, my estimable QC, and an assortment of solicitors including a fetching young woman with long, dark hair. On entering Court 60, I find the public gallery packed with onlookers, admirers and others who, judging by their slovenly appearance, are members of Her



Alan Clark's Secret Court Diary

...as imagined by the *Evening Standard's* Peter Bradshaw who is, in turn, parodied by our own Kathy Marks

Majesty's Press Corps. I also spy the wretched Bradshaw, a balding figure slumped on a bench at the back. I avoid acknowledging him, save for a slight curl of the lip.

10.30am: Hobbs, a sober fellow, begins outlining our case. He says that the *Standard* has failed to make clear that its column, cheekily headed Alan Clark's Secret Political Diary, is not penned by yours truly. It must be said that I would sooner cut off my right hand than stoop to writing such inferior trash. I want the diary withdrawn, and handsome damages. Hobbs recalls how the editor, Max Hastings, offered me my own column soon after I won the Kensington and Chelsea nomination. He explains to Mr Justice Lightman that I turned it

down because Hastings was offering a paltry £60,000 a year as recompense.

10.45am: I strike a gloriously languid pose of wounded dignity, eyes modestly cast down.

Hobbs describes how, on meeting Max at the Chelsea Flower Show last summer, I asked him to pull the offending diary but he refused to play ball. I used to think Max was one of us, but now I'm not so sure. As Hobbs drones on about legal precedents, I dart a glance across at the court usher, a well-preserved redhead with a fine figure beneath her black robe.

11.40am: A succession of witnesses take the stand to declare their conviction that I, and not Bradshaw, was the author of the column. Several work for Denton Hall, my own firm of solic-

itors, while others are old pals, such as Bob Worcester of Mori. The *Standard's* QC, Peter Prescott, fancies himself as a bit of a wit. He paces around theatrically while asking questions, and affects a tone of languorous scepticism.

12.59am: Adjourn to a nearby hotel for a thoroughly enjoyable lunch.

2pm: Charles Walker, agent for my TV and film rights, describes my Diaries as "Pepysian". Paperback copies of my notorious oeuvre are then passed around. Excellent; further sales are guaranteed. Prescott reads out the passage about the woman with the "bouncing globes" with whom I once had the good fortune to share a compartment on a train. Ah, fond memories!

3pm: Reference is made to Clive James, a vulgar Antipodean broadcaster who wrote to Bradshaw expressing his admiration for the spoof column. My gaze drifts to the public gallery, where I catch sight of an exquisite creature with rosebud lips and bedroom eyes. Was it my imagination, or did the faintest thrill of electricity pass between us?

4.30pm: Court adjourns. Look forward to crossing swords with Prescott tomorrow.

ARMANI



GIORGIO ARMANI

**Vapour c
at hand f
long-term
smokers**

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gun-top
... could
... assistance
... smokers need
...
... Health Editor,
... women
... has helped
... about a
... habit.

1. The first step is to identify the problem. This involves understanding the current situation and the goals that need to be achieved.

2. The second step is to analyze the problem. This involves breaking down the problem into smaller, more manageable parts and identifying the causes of the problem.

3. The third step is to develop a plan. This involves determining the steps that need to be taken to solve the problem and the resources that will be needed.

4. The fourth step is to implement the plan. This involves putting the plan into action and monitoring progress.

5. The fifth step is to evaluate the results. This involves assessing the effectiveness of the solution and making any necessary adjustments.

A circular logo with a thick black border. Inside the border, the text "VIE 1996 INSURANCE BROKER" is written along the top arc and "VIE VERY AWARDS" along the bottom arc. In the center, the word "WINNER" is prominently displayed in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below "WINNER", the words "PRIVATE MOTOR" and "INSURER OF THE YEAR" are stacked in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font.



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INSURED OF
THE YEAR



THE US AIR FORCE

South Wales child abuse inquiry spreads to 33 homes

Detectives in South Wales are investigating allegations of child abuse at 33 children's homes. Roger Dobson reports on one of Britain's biggest child abuse inquiries, triggered by the suicide of a care worker nine years ago.

Operation Goldfinch, launched yesterday in South Wales, takes the number of children's homes

in Wales where allegations of abuse have been made or where there have been police investigations to 96.

Detectives in South Wales are now investigating claims of sexual and physical abuse at 33 children's homes, where more than 250 individual allegations by former residents make the inquiry one of Britain's biggest into child abuse. With the latest inquiry, homes in Cardiff, Swansea, Bridgend, Neath, Port Talbot, and the South Wales Valleys, have joined those in Clwyd and

Gwynedd where the North Wales Abuse Tribunal has been investigating over 500 complaints.

"The allegations range from minor physical abuse to the most serious sexual assault," a police spokesman said yesterday.

Allegations of abuse at homes in areas outside South Wales have also been made to detectives in Cardiff and have been passed to other forces for investigation.

A squad of 42 detectives has been set up by South Wales Police and Chief Constable Tony Burden said yesterday that

whatever resources were needed would be made available for an inquiry whose scale is likely to rival that of investigations in Cheshire, North Wales and Merseyside.

The events which led up to the launch of Operation Goldfinch yesterday have their roots in the suicide of a care worker, Alan O'Brien, nine years ago. Following his death, two large suitcases containing paedophile material were found in a left luggage locker at Cardiff railway station. It is not known

who put them there, but O'Brien was being investigated over an allegation of abuse on Merseyside.

Around the time of his death, he was working at the Taff Vale Children's Home in Cardiff. No wider action was taken at the time, but last year an inquiry was launched at the home following the jailing of another care worker for abuse.

Following claims that the discovery of the suitcases in 1989 should have been acted upon at the time, West Midlands Police carried out an independent in-

vestigation. The Crown Prosecution Service has decided that there is sufficient evidence to prosecute a former director of social services in South Glamorgan, and the former head of Taff Vale, for the alleged offence of misconduct in public office.

In September last year, Cardiff social services formally asked the police to investigate allegations of abuse at Taff Vale. South Wales police began the investigation using a helpline to allow former residents to contact them. It is a result of what

police were told by former residents five other homes that were being looked at, and yesterday a second inquiry looking at 27 other homes was launched.

It is the seventeenth and latest of a series of major police investigations in abuse at children's homes in Britain. As with many of the other inquiries, most of the claims relate to the Seventies and Eighties.

One man who has given evidence to the North Wales Tribunal told *The Independent*, "For years they made me think I was

to blame for what happened... it was only when my son was born two years ago that I knew I had to do something. I looked at him and decided that I would do everything I could to make sure the men who abused me never abused any other child."

A helpline has been set up by the police on 01656 865404 for complainants and witnesses to contact.

● Two other former Taff Vale staff have been charged with offences, and a third man aged 50 was arrested yesterday.

Robbers attack airline magnate

A multi-millionaire airline tycoon has been beaten and robbed at his home. Alexandra Williams points out that the raid is only the latest in a series of violent assaults and robberies on wealthy London residents.

Tony Ryan, the owner of the low-cost, no frills airline Ryanair, has been attacked by robbers who forced their way into his west London home, punching him to the ground and stealing cash and jewels.

Mr Ryan, who has an estimated personal fortune of £150m, was ambushed as he and a female companion left his home. Two men forced the couple back inside the house in Cadogan Square, Chelsea, and insisted that Mr Ryan reveal the safe combination number.

When he refused, the multi-millionaire was beaten to the ground. The men grabbed £400 in cash and jewellery and escaped in a car. Detectives have not ruled out the possibility that the raid is linked to a string of violent assaults on wealthy Lon-

don residents. Gangs have targeted people leaving shops such as Harrods and Harvey Nichols in expensive cars and followed them home. The victims have been attacked as they got out of their vehicles or as they were about to enter their homes.

Police believe this was the method used by the gang who held Michael Green, the chairman of Carlton Communications, and his wife Tessa, at knife point at their Mayfair home in April. And, in February, Lady Weidenfeld, wife of the publishing millionaire Lord Weidenfeld, was robbed of nearly £10,000 in jewellery on the doorstep of her Chelsea home.

The Formula One chief Bernie Ecclestone was attacked in July last year as he tried to shield his wife Slavica, who had a £650,000 diamond ring snatched from her finger outside their home. A month later, the wife of Christopher Moran, a multi-millionaire City financier, fought with a gang of five muggers who ambushed the family in the underground car park of their Chelsea home. Helen Moran was pinned to the ground as the gang wrenched off her £15,000 Rolex watch and grabbed her handbag.

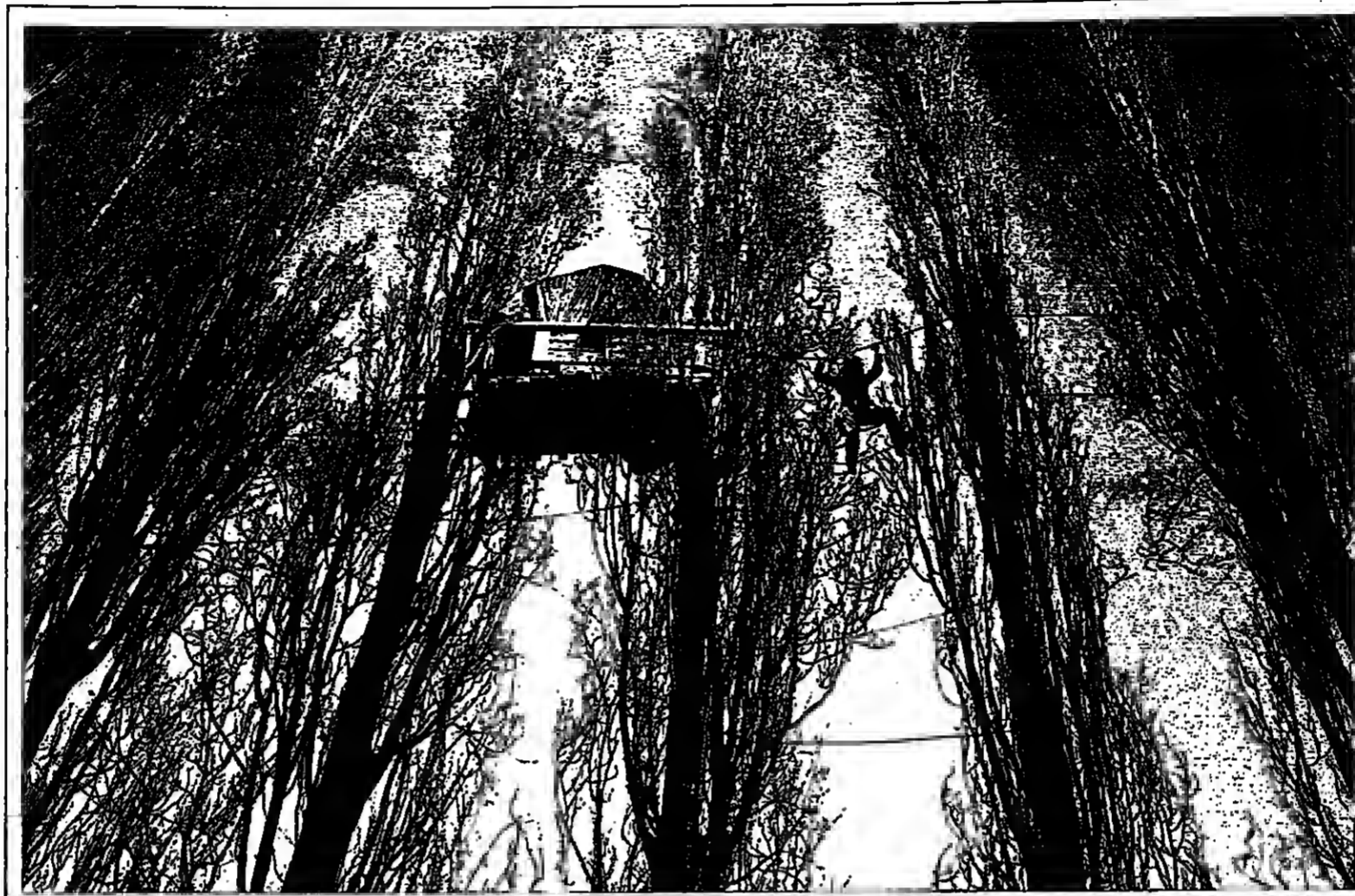
Recent assaults have also included the mugging of a Saudi Arabian diplomat, whose £95,000 Mercedes was stolen, and an attack on the Earl of Dudley and his wife at their Kensington mansion.

Detective Constable Gareth John, heading the inquiry into Saturday's robbery, said: "It's too early to say whether this attack is connected to previous ones but we can't rule out the possibility."

Mr Ryan suffered minor injuries. Police said the two men they are hunting in connection with the attack are both black, in their twenties and 6ft tall.



Tony Ryan: Refused to reveal safe combination



Landmark: A demonstrator climbing between poplar trees in a park in Kingston, south-west London. The trees, which will obscure river views from a development of luxury apartments, are threatened with felling; Kingston Council votes on their fate tonight. Photograph: Phillip Hollis

Congested skies will mean more flight delays

Those travelling by air next summer are likely to face lengthy flight delays as Britain's skies become ever more congested.

With air passenger numbers set to grow by 6 per cent a year until 2000, and no sign of new equipment to deal with the extra flights, more holidaymakers are likely to spend time loitering at the boarding gate.

"Assuming traffic growth remains high, a rise in the level of delays is possible next year," said

Keith Williams, director of safety and operations at National Air Traffic Services (Nats). Mr Williams added: "Delays due to air traffic control will probably not lengthen next year... but more aircraft could be delayed."

About 9 per cent of UK flights were delayed by air traffic capacity limitations in summer 1997. The flights held up were, on average, delayed for 15 minutes.

The matter is made worse as the new centre at Swanwick, de-

signed to relieve the pressure on controllers and planned to start operations in 1996, will not now open until the end of 1999.

Instead, the forecast 20 per cent increase in UK commercial aircraft movements will have to be handled by juggling the resources of the current system. MPs have questioned why a contract to build the new £200m Scottish air traffic control centre has been handed to a consortium headed by the same company - Lockheed Martin -

which has failed to deliver the Swanwick operation.

Mr Williams said a record number of aircraft had been handled by UK controllers this year. He added the London centre at West Drayton handled 1.5 million take-offs and landings last year.

"Delays are creeping up but we should stress that of all the reasons that flights are delayed in Europe, only 19 per cent are for air traffic control reasons." Compounded by problems

caused by both the airlines and passengers, some delays can be lengthy. Last summer, British Airways flights from Gatwick to Athens suffered average delays of 49 minutes. Meanwhile at Heathrow, trips on Virgin Atlantic to New York left on average more than 40 minutes late.

● Nats announced yesterday that despite the rise in air traffic, the number of near-miss incidents had not increased in the past year.

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Hindley officer disciplined

A police officer who helped the dying mother of moors' murder victim Lesley Ann Downey when she attended Myra Hindley's High Court appeal has been disciplined for his actions. Wheelchair user Ann West, 68, who has liver cancer and has just weeks to live, telephoned Detective Constable Norman Brennan, director of the Victims of Crime Trust, to ask for his help in arranging transport and accommodation for the hearing in London earlier this month.

Hindley was appealing against the Home Secretary's decision that she must spend the rest of her life in jail. DC Brennan, 38, who has become a family friend of the Wests, took time off from his duties to collect Mrs West and her husband Alan in a CID car and take her to the court. Press photographers snapped him helping Mrs West into court and he was subsequently disciplined for his conduct. Last Thursday he was transferred to uniformed duties and reprimanded for taking a police car without consent, being absent from duty and making a false entry in his diary.

IRA trial jury sent to hotel

An Old Bailey jury trying four men accused of plotting an IRA lorry-bomb attack on London was yesterday sent to a hotel for a fifth night after again failing to reach verdicts. It returns today to continue deliberations. Patrick Kelly, 31, Brian McHugh, 31, James Murphy, 26 and Michael Phillips, 22, have denied conspiring to cause explosions between 1 January and 24 September last year and possessing explosives. The IRA planned the campaign in London but was foiled by police, who shot dead a vital member of the team and arrested others. The prosecution has alleged. The dead man, Diarmuid O'Neill, 27, was allegedly "at the heart of the conspiracy" and belonged to a Provisional IRA unit which was preparing the attack. The gang had access to many tons of explosives and was using a secure storage unit in north London as a bomb factory, the court heard.

Rail firm fails to halt strike

A rail company yesterday failed in a legal bid to halt a strike by some of its workers which threatens "considerable disruption" to services. Wales & West mounted a legal challenge in the High Court, claiming that a ballot by the Rail, Maritime and Transport union was defective. But the court refused to give the company an injunction, leaving this Friday's strike, in a dispute over hours, still on. The union has also called a 24-hour walkout at South West Trains over a similar row about the working week. David Weir, Managing Director of Wales & West, said he was disappointed with the court's decision, adding that the company will do all it can to minimise disruption on Friday.

Power shower meter call

The days of the super-powerful power shower could be numbered. Government advisers have suggested that homes which have these extra-strong devices fitted should have water meters installed as well and water companies agree.

Sales of power showers with built in electric pumps have soared recently. Taking a shower is generally reckoned to save water compared to having a bath, but that is not so with the stronger power showers.

The Water Regulations Ad-

visory Committee says those which use over 20 litres a minute should require written approval from the household's water company before installation. That would give the company the option of insisting on fitting a water meter, as happens with swimming pools in most of the country.

In less than four minutes, such a shower can consume enough to fill a bath. They flow three times as fast as a non-powered, gravity-fed shower.

The advisors have also sug-

gested cutting the maximum allowed flush volume of lavatory cisterns from 7.5 litres to six for all new WCs. But their suggestion that a European-type flushing mechanism should be allowed as well as the British siphon-based one has angered the Water Companies Association and UK manufacturers, in the shape of the British Bathroom Council.

They claim the siphon-system is virtually leak proof, while Euro-style valves often dribble.

— Nicholas Schoon

Women win record equality payout

The Irish Republic's Labour Court has ordered four female aviation communications officers each to be paid nearly £100,000 (£93,000) backpay in the biggest single award in the history of the country's 10-year-old Equal Pay Act.

The government-appointed

court made the record ruling after declaring that the women were doing the same job as their male employees, but being paid almost £10,000-a-year less. The order that the applicants were entitled to equal pay was backdated to 1989.

The four women are based

at the Irish Aviation Authority station near Shannon Airport, Co Clare, where they provide communication and weather services information to transatlantic flights.

They were sponsored in their action by Ireland's Civil and Public Service Union, which claimed there was "deep-rooted sex discrimination" at their workplace.

Monica Lyons, one of the four, said: "It has been a long fight... and very tough."

DAILY POEM

Not a Love Poem

By Jane Holland

Sing me a love-song that has nothing to do with love.
Write me a line that cuts straight to the bone.

Show me a heart bent back like a blade,
white as a knuckle in the heat and the hate of despair.

Throw me your silence like the slow arc of a curve-ball.
Avoid my eyes, they are terrible as truth.

As a snooker player, Jane Holland ranked 24th in the world before she was banned for "bringing the game into disrepute". Her first collection of poems, *The Brief History of a Disreputable Woman*, is published by Bloodaxe (£6.95).

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7/IN THE COURTS

THE INDEPENDENT
TUESDAY 16 DECEMBER 1997
7

Airport sex pornographers escape jail term



Georgette Neale: Cried as she heard verdict Photograph: Photofest

Children these days may have seen many things, but holiday-makers should not have to run the risk of stumbling across a couple having sex in the airport car park. This was the judge's verdict, reports Clare Gerner.

The cast of the video *Public Places* Volume 4, caught being filmed having sex on the bonnet of a car in the short-stay car park at Heathrow's Terminal 4, were yesterday conditionally discharged for 18 months.

Georgette Neale, a 23-year-old former page three girl, and her producer and co-star, Vincent Curran, 35, were spotted naked atop a silver Vauxhall Carlton on a cold November afternoon last year. They were found guilty of outraging public decency by a jury of eight men and four women who reached their decision after watching an eight-and-a-half minute recording of what had taken place.

Remarkably on the pair's public performance, Judge Fergus Mitchell told Isleworth Crown Court: "What I am here to do is to protect the public from that sort of thing. I suppose children have seen everything these days, but people returning from their holidays hardly expect to find that in a terminal car park."

Neale, of Waltham Abbey, Essex, who was voted stripper

of the year by readers of a tabloid newspaper, burst into tears when the judge delivered the verdict. She had turned to blue movie-making after her £1,000-a-month glamour work dried up and said she had had no idea that the car park scene was illegal until she heard the police sirens.

Curran, an unemployed builder with two children, who has a previous conviction for possessing obscene articles with a view to publishing them for gain, was warned by the judge that he faced a "serious" risk of imprisonment.

The actors were being cheered on by a group of builders when car park staff stumbled across the scene and called the police. Officers recovered a professional video camera, sex aids and 14 videos, seven of which were blue movies, from the car.

After a four-day trial, the jury took less than an hour to find Neale and Curran guilty on two counts of outraging public decency.

Curran was delighted with the verdict. "Let's go fly Concorde," he said afterwards. "I'm so happy, I was expecting to be sent to prison. I bought my bag with me to court today."

The cameraman, Duncan Wright, 50, of Coventry, and lookout James Wright, 20, of Northampton, who is no relation, were convicted of two counts each of aiding and abetting. All four defendants were ordered to contribute to the Crown's £1,866 prosecution bill.



Vincent Curran: Was expecting judge to send him to prison

Killer told police of murder plot

A convicted paedophile who killed a man in his home while an undercover police team kept surveillance outside was jailed for life yesterday.

A judge at Manchester Crown Court told Mikhail Gallatinov, 23, who had been targeted by a police operation shortly after being released from jail, that he was a dangerous man who presented a risk to the public. The jury took just an hour to convict Gallatinov of Moston, Manchester, of murder, rejecting his plea of diminished responsibility.

Jurors were told that during a week-long trial that Adrian Kaminsky, 28, was strangled by Gallatinov in his terraced house because of a grudge he held over a previous homosexual encounter.

Gallatinov had been secretly videotaped telling an undercover police officer who befriended him how he was going to carry out a killing.

His plans involved driving his victim across the Pennines to Hull, and after the murder cutting off the hands and burning the body to prevent identification.

But Gallatinov thwarted police efforts to prevent a murder by strangling his victim the day before he had told the undercover officer he was going to do so.

Police only discovered the killing had already been carried out when they stopped Gallatinov's car on the outskirts of Hull in November last year and found Mr Kaminsky's near-naked body in the boot. Gallatinov had even taken photographs of the dead body just after the murder using a camera lent to him by police.

In two taped meetings with the undercover officer - known only as "Steve" - on the day of the murder, Gallatinov was seen by the jury laughing as he described how he was going to lure his victim to an isolated spot near Hull and murder him.

Police did not know the identity of the intended victim until they discovered Mr Kaminsky's body in the boot.

Jailing Gallatinov, the Recorder of Manchester, Judge Rhys Davies QC, told him: "This is a case in which there has been a completely cold-blooded killing carried out by you without apparent motive and without apparent remorse. You, in my view, are a dangerous young man and you present a considerable risk to the public in the future. These are matters which will have to be reflected in the advice I will have to give to the Secretary of State."

Police later defended their operation and said there was nothing they could have done to prevent the killing taking place.

Coach driver denies blame for children's deaths in Alps crash

A coach driver whose bus crashed in the Alps, killing three children and injuring 25, denied in a French court yesterday that he was to blame for the accident. Jim Shaw, 43, told the Tribunal de Grande Instance in Albertville, in the Savoy region near Mont Blanc, that he could not explain why his coach plunged from a narrow mountain road into a 70ft ravine on 7 July.

Nicola Moore, 16, was killed immedi-

ately and schoolmates Robert Boardman and Keith Ridding, both 14, died later in hospital. Other pupils suffered serious injuries, including broken vertebrae, and Mr Shaw broke several ribs.

Mr Shaw, from Droylsden, Manchester, said he had been unable to drive a coach since the accident and had given up his job.

Monique Hugo, for the prosecution, said he was to blame for the crash and de-

manded a two month suspended prison sentence and fines totalling FF11,000 (£1,155).

But Marie Christine Cartier, for the defence, said there was "not the slightest thing wrong with his driving".

Ms Hugo said that Mr Shaw was professionally responsible for the safety of the 19 pupils of St James's Church of England School, Bolton, and the seven adults on board the coach. Mr Shaw, who was

charged with involuntary homicide, involuntary wounding and failure to control his vehicle, said: "As far as I am concerned, I was driving that vehicle safely."

"To this day I cannot say why the accident happened. The front wheel went off the road and I couldn't get it back on. I remember trying to steer back onto the road, but it just wouldn't go."

Parents of the victims travelled to Al-

bertville to attend yesterday's trial and to lay flowers at the scene of the crash. Their lawyer said they recognised the extent of Mr Shaw's suffering and were making no demands for a stiff sentence or for compensation from him. Under French law, Mr Shaw did not have to enter a plea of guilty or not guilty. The tribunal's verdict will be delivered on 5 January.

Parents of the victims travelled to Al-

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Farmers and butchers were on the march in the capital yesterday in a last-ditch defence of beef-on-the-bone. Kim Sengupta witnesses their anger and frustration, and also discovers some intriguing plans to beat the ban.

There was no shortage of opportunities for sampling beef-

on-the-bone in the centre of London yesterday. Westminster and its environs were awash with beef-on-the-bone of all shapes and sizes, along with the men who sell them. Steaks, ribs, and roasts were carried to the House of Commons and Downing Street by farmers and butchers on the last day before the ban. It was meant to highlight what is seen as an unnecessary and damaging knee-jerk reaction by the Government.

But some butchers are not content simply to take part in

such public protests. It is their duty, they believe, to ensure that their customers continue to have the opportunity to buy beef-on-the-bone if they want to. The evidence of the demand, they say, is plain to see. Sales of beef-on-the-bone have shot up in the last weeks, in some cases by up to 300 per cent.

A few butchers claimed they would continue to sell the ribs and T-bone steaks whatever the law says. Perhaps understandably, they did not want to give out too much detail about

their businesses, as the regulations published last night showed they could face unlimited fines or up to two years in prison for selling illegal beef. Steve, who owns two shops in Essex, said: "My punters know where I am, that's all that matters. They will not be doing anything illegal by buying."

Richard Askew, whose family owns Askew's Butchers in north London, was also willing to flout what he sees as an "undemocratic, dictatorial law". He stated: "I would be prepared

to sell – one has to balance the cost of losing customers with the fines – but it's my father's shop and I don't think he would want to take the risk."

Some of his colleagues, however, believe they have found a method of avoidance rather than evasion. Paul Hambling, from Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, just happen to be "storing" for buyers. He said: "A lot of my customers have placed

for any customers have placed bulk orders for meat-on-the-bone and paid for them. I am simply storing for them. How can I be breaking the law if I am not selling anything after the ban?" Robin Dear, from Stoke Poges, in Buckinghamshire, confirmed that he too is looking after pre-paid bulk orders.

Meat trader George Faulkn-

Meat trader George Faulkner was thinking of revenues from another direction. "How do you think a 'beef-on-the-bone weekend' would go down? Trips to Dublin or Paris perhaps," he mused. "But we are going to get a lot of illegal traf-

fic. I know people are planning to sell it door-to-door from back of vans just like duty-free booze from the Continent."

Last night, ministers hit back at such dissenters by publishing details of how the ban would work. Veal killed at under six months old would be exempt, they said. However, it was still not clear who would remove, store or dispose of the newly-illicit beef bones.

The hutchers delivered a six-ribbed Scottish joint to the House of Commons where they were met by Tory Euro-sceptic William Cash. "There is 1,200,000 to one chance of getting CJD from eating beef-on-the-bone," said the MP. "I have more chances of being hit by an object dropped from the sky."

At that, a lone vegetarian neckled: "Even Shakespeare knew the danger of eating excessive red meat. In *Twelfth Night* he had Andrew Aguecheek saying 'I am a great eater of beef, and I believe it harms my wit.'"

Britain will unilaterally ban the sale of continental beef which has not been subjected to the stringent health and hygiene controls already in force in UK abattoirs, the agriculture minister, Jack Cunningham, told his EU colleagues last night.

In a furious outburst he accused other European governments of "prevaricating, obfuscating and delaying" because they did not want to enforce a Europe-wide ban on offal, brain and other animal parts thought to carry the highest concentration of BSE infectivity. He dismissed as "completely fraudulent" arguments from some member-states such as Germany or Austria, which claim not to need additional precautions because BSE is unknown in their herds.

Mr Cunningham announced his move in Brussels after the 14 other EU governments represented on the Standing Veterinary Committee outvoted Britain to put off for three months a Europe-wide extension of British-style rules reluctantly agreed last July.

"I am not prepared to delay this or to countenance any further delay," said Mr Cunningham, adding that "beef can come in to the country as long as it has been subjected to the same stringent safeguards as required in Britain".

Europe's delay in banning risk material follows protests from the US over over trade in beef by-products, including gelatine used in pharmaceutical drugs, but also to allow more time for research into the potential health risk from lamb, which independent scientists warned about last week.

Eight of the fifteen member-states also claim their herds are BSE-free and that the measures are therefore superfluous but Mr Cunningham rejected this argument as irrelevant in a single European market.

He said there was no guarantee that meat wholesaled in one member-state had not in fact come from a neighbouring country's herd. "My first loyalties and duties lie with safeguarding the health of the British people," Mr Cunningham said, adding that penalties

for breach of the rules would be "significant". Mr Cunningham said he was unconcerned by whether or not his unilateral measure is legal under EU rules. "I am not going to get into prevaricating discussions with them; I am just going to do it."

The practical impact of the ban is likely to be limited, raising suspicions in Brussels that on a day when British farmers took to the streets of London, it is aimed more at diverting public criticism away from the Government and back to Europe. Much of the best exported to the UK comes from Ireland and Mr Cunningham acknowledged that risk material is already removed there under regulations in force since last February. *The French* too have gone ahead with the systematic removal of all specified risk material.

Dutch and German suppliers, however, would be hit if British supermarkets cancelled contracts because of the new requirements.

Mr Cunningham's department made clear the measure did not amount to a trade ban in the strict sense, because meat could be imported into the UK as long as the offending matter was removed before it went on sale. In practice however this would heap costs on continental suppliers, as they would have to upgrade abattoirs to meet the British standards.

Mr Cunningham also accused farm leaders of conveying the wrong impression about the prospect of an early relaxation of the ban on British beef. Dampening expectations for any breakthrough when the *European Commission meets* to discuss the situation today, he said the NFU "may have knowingly or unknowingly" misconstrued the outcome of talks with EU commissioner Emma Bonino last week.

He was still "perfectly content" to allow lamb on the bone to continue to be sold. All the popular cuts, such as rack, cutlets or leg were completely safe, he said. Scientists advising the Government on BSE have advised additional precautions for meat from sheep older than 12 months.

Katherine Butler, Brussels

Kenneth Clarke and Michael Heseltine last night warned the Tory Party chairman, Lord Parkinson, to avoid a swing to the Euro-sceptic right by the Opposition, reports Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent.

Lord Parkinson sought to reassure the high-powered delegation of pro-European MPs that they would still have a voice inside the Tory Party, in spite of the hard-line policy against the single European currency adopted by William Hague.

"Cecil said we were still a broad church, and we had a role to play," said one Tory MP who was at the meeting at Conservative Central Office.

The MPs, members of the Positive European Group, warned against using new electoral rules to pack the places for Conservatives at the European

conservatives at the European Parliament with Euro-sceptics after elections in 1999. The party chairman is understood to have suggested that the candidates may be chosen by an extension of one-member one-vote democracy inside the Tory Party.

Lord Parkinson also told the MPs that he believed that Tony Blair would call the general election a year early, in 2001. "He said that Margaret [Thatcher] had always got to the end of the fourth year of a Parliament

and started planning the election to stop being boxed in. That is what he said Blair would do."

Lord Parkinson told the former Cabinet ministers that the five tests set by the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, for Britain's entry to the single currency made it less likely that Britain could join. He said it was therefore less likely that Europe should

However, his remarks will not satisfy the Euro-sceptic majority of Tory MPs at Westminster who believe fighting the next election on a platform to "save the pound" would be a potent weapon against Mr Blair.

The pro-European group used the meeting to stake out their position, having forced the leadership into compromises over the way the Opposition voted on the ratification of Mr Blair's negotiations at his first European summit in Amsterdam. The meeting followed a warning last week by John Major to Mr Hague against a lurch to the right.

The former Prime Minister has told friends that he has regained his appetite for politics. "He could become another Alec Douglas Home," said one friend, referring to the former Tory prime minister who went on to become foreign secretary.

Mr Hague yesterday told the Conservative Friends of Israel in London that it was "painful to see my party described as greedy, selfish and lacking in compassion... we are proud of our record."

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9/POLITICS

Schools and hospitals could cash in on benefit cuts

Cuts in Britain's benefit bill will be diverted into hospitals and schools, the minister in charge of reforming the system said last night. Frank Field's keynote speech pointed to radical changes in a delayed Green Paper on the benefit system, writes Fran Abrams.

Ministers yesterday again refused to say whether they were considering compelling lone mothers to take jobs under the Welfare to Work scheme.

Harriet Harman, the Secretary of State for Social Security, faced new criticism from Labour backbenchers in the Commons just hours before her colleague Frank Field set out the principles for the reforms.

Asked whether single mothers would be forced into jobs, she replied: "Compulsion is not the issue." She also failed to rule out means testing or taxing disability benefits, but did say that "no one is even talking about taking away benefits off those who need them - disabled or pensioners. Of course we mustn't do that". The Government would honour its pledge to maintain the old-age pension, she said.

However, Mr Field, minister for welfare reform, suggested that money could be diverted from benefits into health and education. In a lecture organised by *Prospect* magazine, he added that the benefits bill - currently £100bn per year and rising fast - could be cut if more people went out to work.

He also said that the current system was "leaking billions of pounds to the wrong people every year" through fraud, and

that this could not go on. "If savings are made from the social security budget - and by moving people into work we will reduce the financial load - we will be releasing resources for education and health," he said.

But while the aim was to divert resources to other areas, Britain should not aim for a "bargain-basement system" like the one in the United States, where welfare had become a dirty word because it was seen as only being for the poor.

He also suggested that more benefits could be delivered through public-private partnerships or even by voluntary organisations. Friendly societies, trades unions and charities could administer benefits, bringing them closer to those who received them, he said.

He repeated that there would be "hard choices" to be made and added: "I am under no illusions that this is a long game, or that we need all the help we can get."

A spokesman for the Department of Social Security confirmed last night that Mr Field's lecture on the principles that should govern welfare reform gave pointers to a forthcoming Green Paper on the subject. It had been due by the end of the year, but is now expected some time in January or February.

There was also confirmation last night that social security ministers and environment ministers were working on a scheme that could dramatically reduce the amount spent each year on housing benefits. Ms Harman told Dale Campbell-Savours, Labour MP for Worthington and a strong advocate of reforms to pin levels of rent paid to landlords, housing associations and local authorities, that housing benefits were "very much part of the comprehensive spending review".



Harriet Harman: Pressed again in the Commons on whether single mothers would be forced to work under benefits reform, she replied: "Compulsion is not the issue"
Photograph: Brian Harris



Frank Field: Billions of pounds 'leaking to the wrong people every year' through fraud must be stopped

Totting up bill for illness and disability

How many people get it? 4.3 million get the general sickness and disability benefits. On top of that some people can claim disability premium on top of income support.

How much does it cost? The disability bill has trebled since the early 1980s from £4.1bn (£7bn in today's prices) to £23.5bn. It is now one-quarter of the Social Security Budget.

What types of benefit are there? The main benefits are Incapacity benefits (a means tested benefit for short-/long-term people who are unable to work), Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Severe Disablement Allowance, Invalid Care Allowance, industrial injuries allowance, war pensions.

Who gets what? 1.9 million get Disability Living Allowance, which is split into two components: mobility (£13.50-£34.60 per week) and care (£13.50-£49.50).

How about paying for care? Attendance Allowance is a tax-free benefit for help with care ranging from £32.40 to £48.50.

What if I'm disabled through work? You are eligible for Industrial Injuries Benefit, claimed by a quarter of a million people.

Who pays? The Government, if there is no blame attached to the company for your disablement.

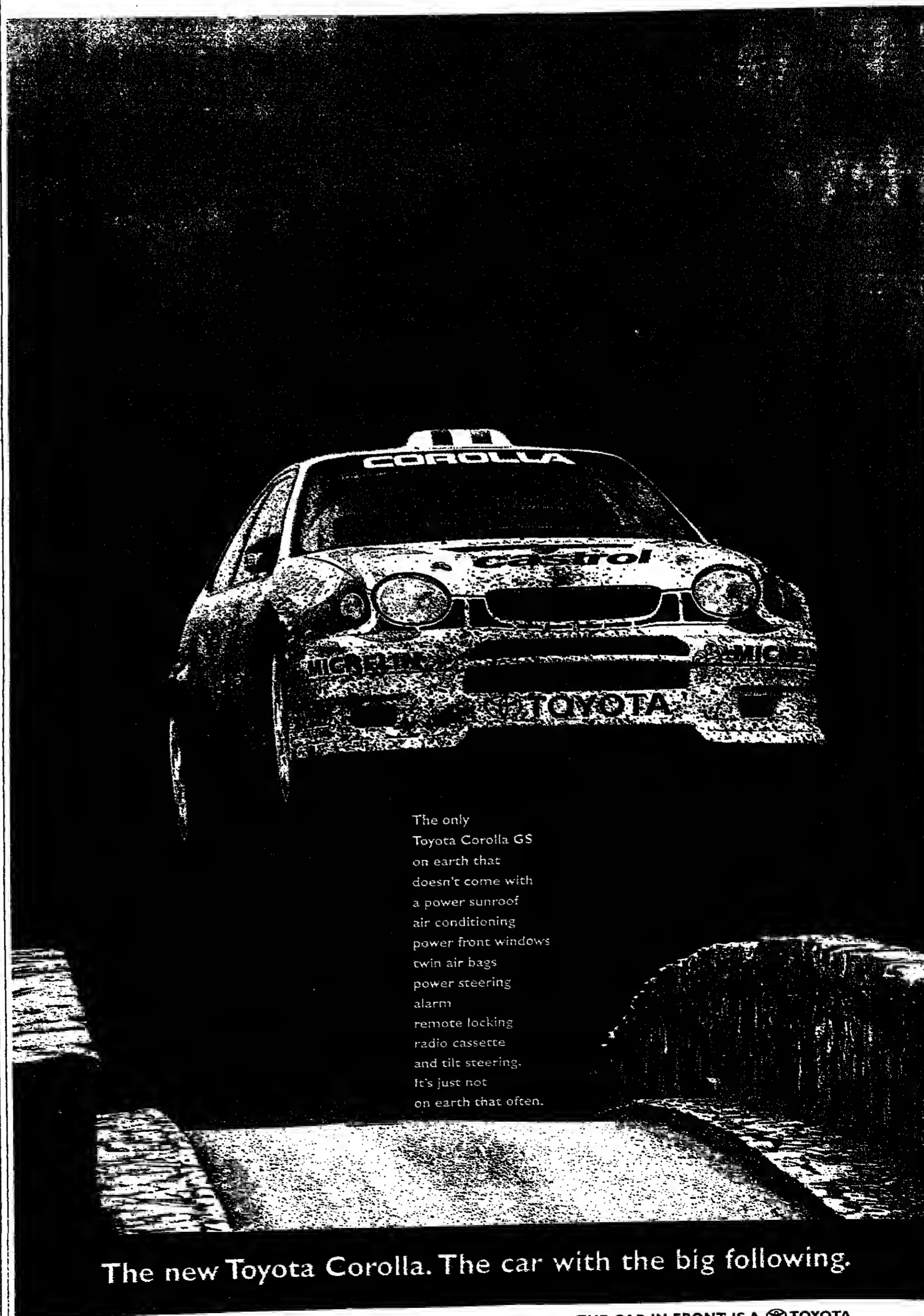
What if I can't work? You may be eligible for Incapacity Benefit - 2.4 million get it. Short-term is £47.10 a week, long-term £55.70. To get this benefit people have to take the All Work Test - which involves a doctor assessing your ability to work, looking at your ability to walk, sit, lift and stand in addition to any injuries or ailments you may have. The scoring system means anyone with 15 points or more on a 0-30 scale remains in benefit.

What if I haven't paid enough National Insurance to qualify for incapacity benefit? You get Severe Disablement Allowance, which is tax free. Again you have to take the All Work Test.

What if I am working? 12,500 get Disability Working Allowance - those working for low wages or short hours get £49.55 single £77.55 for a couple.

Why has the bill gone up so much? A combination of factors:

1. A push in the early 1990s to alert people that they could claim such benefits.
2. An ageing population needs more care.
3. There were suggestions that some people may have been shunted on to incapacity benefit rather than stay on the unemployment count, and that some GPs were sympathetic to putting people on benefit. Incapacity Benefit, with its All Work Test, was introduced in April 1995 to try to stop this.



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French officers accused of extreme pro-Serb bias

France said yesterday that it was shocked to be accused of harbouring war criminals in Bosnia. But John Lichfield in Paris says the newspaper 'Le Monde' has reported extreme pro-Serb sentiments among French officers in the country.

troops. She protested that France alone was refusing to allow its military officers to testify before the Bosnian, and Rwandan, war crimes tribunals.

After the meeting yesterday afternoon, the ministry spokeswoman said Mr Vedrine had told Ms Arbour that he was "deeply shocked" by these "scandalous allegations". He said France would co-operate with the international tribunals "in its own

way". But it would refuse to allow the tribunals to be turned into a media circus in which witnesses became indistinguishable from the accused.

Ms Arbour, by all accounts, stood her ground. She told Mr Vedrine that France was failing in its duty to co-operate with the formal international inquiries which it had itself helped to create.

In the meantime, further fuel was

poured on the controversy by the influential newspaper *Le Monde* (the first to carry Ms Arbour's allegations). The newspaper's correspondent in Sarajevo reported widespread pro-Serb sentiment among senior French officers serving in Bosnia.

Christian Lecomte quoted one colonel at the French headquarters as saying that the Serbs had been "sacrificed" by the Day-

ton accords of November 1995 which ended the Bosnian civil war. The re-arming of the Muslims by the United States would lead to an "Islamic resurgence in the region", he said, which would "destabilise Europe".

To justify his remarks, the officer claimed that Serbian schoolgirls in Sarajevo were being forced to wear Islamic headscarves. This, *Le Monde* said, was a total-

ly false allegation, peddled by extremist Serbs.

In interviews with the French press, Ms Arbour claimed that most of the indicted Serb war criminals sought by the Hague tribunal - and all the most important ones - were living in impunity in the French sector of Bosnia.

The French defence ministry retorted yesterday that there were only "six to eight" wanted people in the French zone, compared to 10 in the US sector and "nearly 25 in the British sector". *Le Monde* complained that these figures were out of date; there had been a movement of indicted Serbs into the French zone since the arrest of one Serb and the killing of another by British troops in the north-western town of Prijedor last July.

The newspaper said that indicted Serbs were "parading" through Foca, in eastern Bosnia, one of the principal towns in the French zone. They included Dragan Gogovic and Janko Jajic, two of the Bosnian Serb officials accused of organising the systematic rape of Muslim women in 1992.

"Scandalous", "unspeakable", "profoundly shocking". The French foreign ministry is expert at hinting its displeasure but all diplomatic language went out of the window yesterday.

The foreign minister, Hubert Vedrine, furiously protested in person to Louise Arbour, the chief prosecutor of the international war crimes tribunals in The Hague. It was Ms Arbour, a French-Canadian judge, who accused France at the weekend of, in effect, providing a safe haven for indicted Serb war criminals in the south-east part of Bosnia which is patrolled by French

CLINTON TO VISIT TROOPS AT CHRISTMAS AS BATTLE WITH CONGRESS LOOMS

President Bill Clinton is to make a flying pre-Christmas visit to United States troops serving with the Nato-led contingent in Bosnia. The visit, likely to take place next weekend and take in Tuzla and Sarajevo, is seen not just as a seasonal morale-booster for the troops, but as a sign of the administration's continuing commitment to maintaining a US military presence in former Yugoslavia.

The congressional mandate for the troops to remain in Bosnia expires at the

end of June and Congress, with a Republican majority in both houses, a distinctly isolationist tinge and elections due next year, is expected to contest any proposal that the troops should stay longer.

Administration officials say that Mr Clinton's visit will be his opening gambit in the campaign to keep US troops in place. They say he will use his trip to warn that progress made since the Dayton accords were signed two years ago is insufficient to warrant the withdrawal of US troops by the

June deadline. While Britain and other European have largely accepted the argument for remaining, they also recognise that it is unrealistic for them to stay without the Americans. The US provides satellite reconnaissance, transport helicopters and other equipment that Europe lacks but are considered essential to the operations of the Nato-led Stabilisation Force (S-For).

While Mr Clinton has publicly acknowledged that US troops will probably have to stay in Bosnia beyond the June

deadline, divisions have emerged between members of his administration. The Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, seems more inclined to argue for a continued US role in Bosnia than the Defense Secretary, William Cohen - although one interpretation is that Mr Cohen is simply holding out for more money and better terms for the cash-strapped military than objecting in principle to the extension of involvement.

— Mary Dejevsky, Washington

Guyana breaks tradition

Voters in Guyana went to the polls yesterday, with a white woman born in the United States tipped to emerge as the country's president.

In South America's only English-speaking nation, politics has little to do with ideology and a lot to do with ethnic origins. The country is split between immigrants from the Indian sub-continent and those of African origin, descendants of those brought over in British colonial days. Strange, then, that the winner of the presidential ballot is likely to be an elderly Jewish woman from Chicago.

Janet Jagan, 76, an avowed but mellowed Marxist, seems set for the presidential palace as candidate of the ruling People's Progressive Party (PPP). In fact, she has not been out of the palace for long because she is the widow of Cheddi Jagan, the PPP's long-time leader who died in office in March this year.

Mrs Jagan has been a citizen of Guyana, known as British Guyana until it became independent in 1966, for three decades. She met her husband in the US during the Second World War when he was a dental student. That makes her something of an honorary member of the Indian community, which the PPP, founded by Mr Jagan, traditionally represents.

Polls suggest that she will defeat Desmond Hoyte, 68, the candidate of the opposition People's National Congress (PNC), whose powerbase is the community of African descent.

Mrs Jagan appears to have been put forward to unite the PPP under her husband's name, and it is believed that after winning the election she could hand over to a younger successor, widely tipped to be Barrath Jagdeo, now finance minister.

— Phil Davison



A Thai woman throws holy water onto skulls and bones to be burned in the world's largest mass cremation at a temple in Samut Sakorn province. Tons of bones and 21,347 skulls are to be cremated this week to mark the end of urban burials in Bangkok. The unclaimed remains were taken from a Chinese cemetery

Photograph: Reuters

Castro gets into the festive spirit

President Fidel Castro is offering to declare Christmas an official holiday this year and share Cuba's limited resources to ensure the success of the Pope's visit to the Communist country.

During a three-hour speech broadcast on Sunday night on national television, Mr Castro was unusually warm in his com-

ments about the Church and the Pope, calling John Paul's visit here from 21 to 25 January an "honour for Cuba, and a valiant gesture."

"... was the strongest sign of Mr. Castro's resolve to ensure a trouble-free visit - the first by a pope to the island.

AP - Havana

Airliner crashes in Sharjah

An airliner with 86 people on board crashed yesterday near an airport in the United Arab Emirates. There was no word on survivors. The Tu-154 was en route from Tajikistan to Sharjah, UAE. Emergency teams were en route to the crash site.

The plane was carrying 77 passengers and nine crew. Local reports say the plane went down in a desert outside the airport of Sharjah, one of the seven emirates.

— AP, Dubai

Carlos lawyers pull out

Three lawyers representing Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, known as Carlos the Jackal, withdrew from his trial in Paris yesterday. The manoeuvre seemed to be part of a strategy to reduce the trial to a farce. The presiding judge ordered the principle defence lawyer, Isabelle Coutant-Peyre, to continue in the case and made a formal complaint to the Paris bar when she refused. The president of the bar also ordered her to resume her duties but she again declined. Ms Coutant-Peyre said she was withdrawing because the court had delayed judgement on her complaint that key witnesses were being withheld from the trial. The hearing continued without the three lawyers.

Ramirez Sanchez is accused of the murder of two French secret service agents and a Lebanese informer in Paris in June 1975.

— John Lichfield, Paris

Tsar's bones can be moved

Russia's Supreme Court yesterday overturned a ban by a regional court on transferring to Moscow the remains of the country's last tsar and his family, who were murdered by Bolsheviks in 1918. The decision opens the way for a final round of tests to establish the bones' authenticity. Last month the Sverdlovsk regional court blocked the transfer of the bones from the Ural city of Yekaterinburg. Shortly afterwards the court allowed some of the bones to be transferred to the capital for tests.

— Reuters, Moscow

Disabled girls sterilised

A report released yesterday by the government's human rights agency said more than 1,000 girls with learning difficulties had been illegally sterilised in the last five years. In 1992, a High Court decision made sterilisation illegal if it was not medically required, unless permission was granted by a court or tribunal. The report, commissioned by the federal Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, showed permission had been granted 17 times since 1992 for women to be sterilised. However, the commission said figures showed at least 1,045 girls have been sterilised over that period.

— AP, Sydney

Party split on Australia's right

Australia's One Nation party, led by Pauline Hanson who triggered a row about race, is in turmoil after the launch of a breakaway party, a former Hanson supporter said yesterday.

Concerns about the party's direction and ultra-right wing policies prompted the formation of the new Australian One Nation Party, which was launched in New South Wales last Sunday.

Peter Archer, one of the rebel party's founding members, said that Ms Hanson faced a "very bleak" future. "I think One Nation will eventually fizzle," he told Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio yesterday. "... the breakaway [party] may have accelerated that process but ... I think the current Pauline Hanson's One Nation would have been in total

turmoil before the next election."

Mr Archer, who has been accused in parliament of having links with the right-wing League of Rights group, said former supporters of Ms Hanson had become concerned about the power of the party's core leaders. "It's very dictatorial ... If you do express any concerns or have any ideas, you're either fobbed off or smeared, or kicked out of the party, or both," he said.

Ms Hanson, elected to parliament 21 months ago, shot to prominence last year when she warned that Australia was in danger of being swamped by Asians and criticised Aboriginal welfare. But her party's popularity has steadily to about 3 per cent from more than 10 per cent after its launch last April.

— Reuters, Canberra

Lau in passport battle

Emily Lau, one of Hong Kong's most outspoken politicians, is being forced to give up her British passport so that she can contest next May's legislative council elections. She had been planning to challenge the legality of the ban on foreign passport holders standing for seats in the geographic constituencies, but said yesterday that time was running out for such a challenge.

Under Hong Kong's new election laws, foreign passport holders will be allowed to stand in certain so-called functional constituencies, where seats are filled by voters from occupational groups. Mrs Lau described this as "very arbitrary and very unfair".

Many middle-class people in Hong Kong hold foreign passports, including a high percentage of those who sat in the last elected legislature which was dissolved when China resumed sovereignty over Hong Kong in July. Under new rules, a maximum of 20 per cent of members will be allowed to hold foreign passports.

Mrs Lau, a former journalist, has lived in Britain where she worked for the BBC. When she returned to Hong Kong, she quickly established a reputation as one of the most daunting interrogators of government officials. She was one of the few reporters to have taken Margaret Thatcher, the former prime minister, by surprise after the signing of the 1984 agreement for Hong Kong's reversal to Chinese rule. At a memorable press conference, she asked Mrs Thatcher how she felt about delivering Hong Kong's people into the hands of Communist rule. The question received a blustery response.

Mrs Lau is a founder member of the Frontier Party. She received a record number of votes in the last elections for the legislature, and was one of the council's most popular and aggressive members.

Although the supporters of the new regime tend to label all its opponents as being "pro-British", they have found it hard to pin this label on Emily Lau who, despite her British citizenship, was a harsh critic of the outgoing regime.

— Stephen Vines, Hong Kong

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Militias raid camps as new offensive starts in the killing fields

The latest massacre in Rwanda has further dashed hopes for peace after the 1994 genocide. *Amelia French in Kigali reports on how remnants of the militias which carried out the genocide are stepping up their campaign of violence.*

Everyone thought it was likely to happen again and it did. Last week, suspected Rwandan Hutu militiamen attacked a UN camp for Tutsi refugees from Congo-Zaire and massacred many of the inhabitants.

It was the second attack in only four months on the camp at Mudende, situated in one of the most violent areas of north-western Rwanda. In August, more than 130 refugees were killed.

This time, the official death-toll was about 270, though survivors say the true figure was much higher.

The Rwandan army, which counted the bodies along with UN officials, denies this. But the hideous results were there for all to see: charred bodies, babies hacked to death, blood-soaked clothes strewn around, and burnt-out tents.

The regional military chief, Col Kayumba Nyamwasa, said he had suspended the army commander guarding the camp for failing to respond when attackers set about the



camp with guns, grenades and machetes at around midnight.

Up to 200 tents were burned. "I looked out of my window and saw flames going right up into the sky," one resident said.

Rwandan officials and the UN are trying to work out what is to be done with more than 16,000 survivors of the carnage, most of whom have fled to a nearby temporary camp.

This was the latest attack in an escalating campaign of violence in north-west Rwanda by Hutu militiamen, apparently still committed to the agenda of Tutsi extermination that the world witnessed three years ago.

The Rwandan authorities say the militiamen are the remnants of the former government army and their militia allies, who carried out the genocide of 1994, in which an estimated 800,000 Tutsis and Hutu opponents of the regime were killed.

They say most of the militiamen returned to Rwanda during the final repatriation of refugees who fled to Zaire and elsewhere in 1994, when the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front took power. Certainly, the violence has increased dramatically following the last mass repatriation of Hutu refugees over the past year.

"We are not fighting a war, we are fighting genocide," Col Kayumba said the day after the attack, as he stood beside the

bodies of women and children laid out for burial at the camp at Mudende.

The Rwandan government has been accused of dragging its feet over the repatriation of Tutsi refugees to Congo-Zaire. It has been suggested that if they were sent back over the border, the Tutsi minority in the north-west of Rwanda would feel even more vulnerable.

The ethnic divide in the north-west between the Hutus and Tutsis is becoming increasingly bitter. The methods which are used by the militiamen include attacking and killing Tutsi civilians, storming jails to release genocide suspects, killing officials, both Tutsi and Hutus believed to be co-operating with the army, burning local administration buildings and ambushing passenger and military vehicles.

The army says that after each attack, the militiamen melt back into the local population, which clearly supports them. Often, the local Hutu population flees immediately after an attack, fearing retribution at the hands of the army. Reports from the north-west speak of large numbers of Hutu civilians being killed in the army's counter-insurgency operations. Tutsi civilians are also reported to be carrying out reprisal killings of Hutus from time to time.

The army mostly denies all this and says such reports are put out by supporters of the militiamen. Given the security situation in the region, diplomats, human-rights monitors, members of international organisations and journalists have been advised to travel only with military escorts. This makes independent information hard to come by.

The Rwandan authorities are increasingly maintaining that there is no such thing as innocent bystanders amongst the Hutus of the north-west, which is traditionally the heartland of Hutu extremism. Undoubtedly, the assumption of guilt and the fear of being killed during military operations is pushing an increasing number of young men into the bush.

Recently, local people have begun crossing the border into neighbouring Congo-Zaire in flight from the fighting. But they are usually rounded up and pushed back into Rwanda by the Congolese authorities.

Col Kayumba believes that his forces are fighting an estimated 15,000 militiamen in the north-west. He says the rebels have no political or economic agenda and are intent only on killing the Tutsis or chasing them out of the country. "Tutsis, go back to your place of origin or accept to die," read a message scrawled in blue chalk on a wall close to Mudende camp.

The Rwandan government yesterday issued a statement describing the activities of the Hutu militiamen as genocide and said this was the direct responsibility of the international community, which should deal with the situation in that context, although the government made clear it could deal with the military situation itself.

Mary Robinson, the former Irish president and now UN Commissioner for Human Rights, and Madeleine Albright, US Secretary of State have both visited Rwanda in the past 10 days, and voiced their fears about the worsening situation in the north-west.



A woman and her children at a temporary refugee camp which was set up to protect those who survived the massacre at Mudende, in which at least 270 people died. It was the latest attack in an escalating campaign of violence in north-west Rwanda by Hutu militiamen, apparently still committed to the agenda of Tutsi extermination that the world witnessed three years ago. Photograph: Corinne Dufka/Reuters

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US wary as Iran tries to exorcise its demons

Within hours of Iranian President Khatami's appeal for a 'dialogue' with the United States, Washington was demanding 'deeds, not words' from the Iranian leader. As our Middle East correspondent explains, however, Iran is more anxious than ever to broaden its relationships with the outside world.

Iran has never been so anxious for contact with the outside world as it is today. Even under the Shah, that faithful ally of Washington - the so-called "Light of the Aryans" - Persia was an introverted, xenophobic nation.

All the more ironic, therefore, that the country which its enemies wish to portray as backward, medieval and degenerate should hold out its arms - through its newly elected President Mohamed Khatami - to the United States.

Yet this extraordinary transformation has now come to pass. The internal struggles with the revolution's old guard continue, but Mr Khatami - if he lives long enough to accomplish his ambitions - seems set on bringing Iran back into the comity of nations.

He knows, of course, that Washington's - and Israel's - attempt to isolate Iran has failed; the European Union and the Arabs who gathered for the Islamic summit in Tehran last week have seen to that.

But his remarkable press conference in Tehran on Sunday was a challenge to the US. Even his remarks on the Palestinians at last week's Islamic conference - that they should have a state, an end to occupation, the return of refugees - sounded almost identical to America's official policies on the Middle East.

Talking about "deeds not words" will not improve relations between Washington and Tehran. The US wants to talk about Iran's "terrorism" - something Iran will not admit

to - and its opposition to the now defunct Middle East "peace process", which Mr Khatami says he is against but will not obstruct. Mr Khatami would far rather start with a discussion of the vast amount of money - a cool \$11bn - which the US owes to the pre-revolutionary Iranian regime. And meanwhile he has to face his internal enemies, who claim that any American praise for Iran will signal a betrayal of the Islamic revolution.

He has problems enough to contend with. Earlier this year, when it seemed as if Syria wished to improve its relations with the US, Israeli press reports claimed that "secret contacts" had been made between officials from Damascus and Jerusalem. The story was untrue, but the result predictable: Syria denied the claim, condemned Israel for making it - and angered the Americans. Now the Iranians want to repair their shattered relationship with the US - and are greeted by a similar story.

According to the Israeli daily *Haaretz*, Washington and Tehran began a "clandestine dialogue" in Europe shortly after Mr Khatami's May election. Israel, the paper said, expressed its "concern" while the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, asked AIPAC - the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee, Israel's most powerful lobby group in the US - to prevent such a change in American policy. *Haaretz* insisted its story came from an unnamed former Clinton administration official who had helped set up the meetings. True or false?

Since Mr Khatami did not take office until August - before which President Rafsanjani remained head of state - it seems an unlikely tale. Mr Khatami may have been an innocent soul when on Sunday he expressed his respect "for the great American people" - as if they had not elected President Clinton - but he is no fool. To open secret talks with the Americans would be to give his Iranian adversaries, especially the religious guide, Ali Khamenei, enough ammunition to call for his impeachment.

No one, of course, has for-



New view: A poster put up in Tehran for the recent Islamic summit depicting 'satanic powers' trying to destroy Islam. Tehran's line is now less extreme

Photograph: Reuters

gotten that Iran, Israel and the US have been deeply involved in each other's affairs since the 1979 revolution. While Washington was secretly supporting Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iraq, it was co-operating with

BY ROBERT FISK

Israel to buy the freedom of American hostages in Lebanon - with clandestine missile shipments and a covert visit to Iran by Robert McFarlane (along with a Bible from President Reagan, a made-in-Israel cake and a set of duelling pistols).

Mr Rafsanjani broke the story - and thus saved his presidency - before Washington could vouchsafe its own version

of this ridiculous affair. Once it was revealed - by Mr Rafsanjani himself - that US diplomats had travelled to Tehran on fraudulent Irish passports (the originals appear to have been stolen from the Irish embassy in Athens) and once it became known that Mr McFarlane had subsequently tried to kill himself, the Iranian president was safe.

True, the Iranians walk the same corridors as the Americans at the UN. True, too, US officials have put the *mujahedin-qaliq* - Iran's fiercest opponents, with bases in Iraq - on the American list of international "terrorists". But this is a long way from secret dialogue.

What President Khatami wants is to de-beastalise Iran, to present his country - with all its problems and flaws and human-rights abuses - as a nation struggling to create civil peace and freedom of thought, some-

thing which Americans supposedly prize in their own society. "At the appropriate time, I'll present my words to the American people," he said in Tehran on Sunday. "I'd hope for a thoughtful dialogue with the American people and through this thoughtful dialogue we could get closer to peace and security and tranquillity." He wanted no more talking with "forked tongues".

And it is probably true that the president intends to open this "dialogue" through the medium of television, through interviews with American journalists and - perhaps - an exchange of academics between both countries.

Even before his election, officials at the ministry of Islamic guidance were circulating copies of an article by the American commentator Milton Viorst which called for a reasoned relationship with Iran.

Saddam toys with UN

The Chief UN weapons inspector, Richard Butler, said yesterday that Iraq was insisting his inspectors could not enter presidential palaces despite his demands for unrestricted access throughout Iraq.

"Iraq has said that will not occur. That is the question that the Security Council will have to consider, whether it is prepared to accept that or not," Mr Butler said after talks with the Iraqi deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, yesterday.

Mr Butler said that Iraq was prepared to let inspectors into other sensitive sites "in varying degrees".

Mr Butler's deputy, Charles Duelfer, said earlier that Iraq had given a clearer

picture in the talks of its definition of three categories of inspections sites: "normal" sites where the UN has ongoing inspections, "sensitive" sites which touch on its security concerns, and "presidential" sites.

"On the sites that we are permitted to inspect, they have expressed a willingness to be flexible," he said.

Iraqi officials have been adamant in public statements ahead of the talks that "presidential sites" remain off-limits to the UN.

The issue of access has dogged the inspectors for six years. They say Iraq consistently tried to conceal elements of its weapons programmes and has blocked them from

sites where those items may have been hidden.

With an increased possibility of germ warfare, the US Defense Secretary, William Cohen, has decided America's 1.5 million men and women in uniform will be inoculated against anthrax.

The biological agent can be fatal even in microscopic amounts.

The inoculations, which involve six shots over 18 months, will cost about \$120m (£72m), senior Pentagon officials said yesterday, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The concern is for protecting US forces amid a mounting threat of biological or chemical warfare against troops at home or overseas.

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Impotent

It's a man's problem, isn't it? Certainly it is, but it's a woman's problem, especially when she's very often there much more lost than on the obvious.

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Impotence: the woman's story

It's a man's problem, isn't it? Certainly it is. But it's a woman's despair especially because, says Fiona Hanlock, very often there is much more lost than just the obvious.

Women have four different reactions to a man's impotence, says Margaret Ramage, a sexual relationship therapist. First is a feeling that she is not attractive enough or sexy enough. Second is suspicion, the conviction that her partner must be having an affair. "I was sure my partner was seeing someone else," said 30-year-old Susan. "We'd always had a great sex life and then suddenly it stopped, just like that. I was always accusing him, and he would promise me that he had nothing on the side, but I honestly couldn't believe him."

Third is the feeling of relief if the woman never enjoyed sex in the first place. "Sometimes it can be a relief for both partners," says Margaret Ramage. "Some people are not good at making love and never have been and struggle with it throughout their married life, thinking it has to be done because that's what's expected of you in a marriage."

And fourth is the fear that there's something seriously wrong with her man - that he must be suffering from diabetes, or working too hard.

"My husband's been to see three sex therapists," says 49-year-old Jane, married to a man who has been impotent for eight years. "None of them ever wanted to see me, despite the fact that impotency is a joint problem suffered by both partners, not just one. One doctor said to my husband, 'Well, she's 49, so why is she bothered?' Can you believe it? I have felt so terribly rejected. I would cuddle up to him and make all kinds of efforts, but was just pushed away. I didn't feel feminine any more. I'm a businesswoman and I can take most things but this really floors me. Most people don't realise that impotency doesn't just mean the inability to have



Bed inmates: feelings of rejection, isolation, lack of love that an impotent man's partner may feel are often ignored

Telegraph Colour Library

intercourse. My husband has also lost all desire. So kissing is not even sensual."

"It's extremely important that both partners come for counselling," says Margaret Ramage. "Often the women are more in need of it than the men, but men are against their partners coming to therapy or counselling because they feel so ashamed and feel it's something they have to deal with on their own. They don't realise that sex has a lot more to do with intimacy than an erect penis or even bed. One couple came to me saying they had no sex life and yet they were sitting close, making eye contact, flirting and talking about things they used to do in bed. I said, 'What do you mean you have no sex life? I can see it happening even now, in front of me. Just because you don't achieve penetration doesn't mean you have no sex life. It's the partnerships in which all in-

timacy is cut out that often break up, not because of the lack of an erection."

Part of the problem is that some men, most of whom see sex in terms of performance, cannot understand that most women see sex in terms of their relationship. So 10 start with they may try to make love and fail, and then they get so discouraged and anxious that they cannot bear to be cuddly or even kiss for fear it will lead to sex and another failure.

"My man eventually withdrew completely," said Paula, who lived with an impotent man for a year. "First he refused to cuddle up, then he refused to kiss me, then he'd just sneak out of bed in the morning as quickly as possible to avoid any kind of contact. Then he started getting dressed and undressed in another room so I wouldn't see him naked. He stopped holding my hand and he even stopped calling me

"darling." Finally there was no intimacy left at all because he obviously felt that any kind of closeness might lead to a failure in performance, which he couldn't bear. We split up at that point. A therapist I saw said I was taking my man's anxieties on to my own shoulders, and it was his worries about his sexuality I was experiencing, not my own. But I did feel that up to a point I was having to damp down my own sexuality in the face of my partner's lack of potency, and that made me feel even more unsexy and resentful."

Nearly all men have periods of impotence after the age of 45. With long-term problems it's found that many cases of impotence have a medical basis, so partners are often right to worry that their men are ill. It turned out that Jane's husband had diabetes, though not before he'd been to one sex counsellor who encouraged

him to ask his wife to "dress up in sexy clothes and have sex in unusual places, like in a country lane". It made me feel sick. He was then told to stop all carressing and touching for 10 weeks and then gradually to start massaging each other. All I wanted was for someone to actually talk to me, I was going through hell and back. The partner in impotence is totally ignored and any trauma you may be going through yourself with feelings of total rejection, isolation, lack of love, are just left for you to deal with. And what is worse is that because it is such a personal problem and you want to be loyal to your partner, you can't talk about it to anyone, not even family or friends."

What about other ways of having sex? Unfortunately, an impotent man is often reluctant to try this because any hint of sex reminds him of his failure and therefore, however kind

and unselfish he may be, he can't bear to give his partner sexual pleasure manually because he believes that penetration, erection and orgasm is everything. "Anyway, other ways of having sex are not the same; you want to feel wanted," says Jane.

There are many more medical treatments on offer than there used to be. Injections can cause erections and even enable the man to ejaculate; vacuum pumps are more difficult to use, but they can often work successfully - they can make a man have an orgasm but not ejaculate. But many couples find them distasteful until they get used to them.

"The problem is that these treatments are not providing the cure they should," says Margaret Ramage. "They simply address the erection problem, when in fact women's anxieties should be addressed as well as men's."

Keeping Father Christmas fit for duty

Every year, as Christmas approaches, Santa Claus visits his local health centre for a check-up. We have had an exclusive look at his doctor's report.

Name: Mr S Claus, aka Father Christmas, St Nicholas, St Nick.
Age: approx 1,717 (born AD 280).
Marital status: single, but lives with numerous elves and several animal companions.
Nationality: originally from Asia Minor, now lives at North Pole.

Occupation: an early Christian bishop turned toy-deliverer. Also the patron saint of children and seafarers.
Comment: Mr Claus is in remarkably good shape for a man of his age. (He already exceeds the life expectancy of the average European by 1,648 years.) However, his large waist circumference and higher than recommended body mass make him vulnerable to heart disease and diabetes.
Recommendation: he should eat fewer mince pies (200 calories each) and consume at least five portions of fresh fruit and vegetables a day.

Comment: Mr Claus informs me that he prefers his sleigh to cruise at 10,000 metres to avoid bad weather and I am therefore concerned about his vulnerability to altitude sickness. I am also worried that, when he enters UK airspace, he might be mistakenly identified on radar as an intruder and shot down.

Recommendation: he should ensure that his sleigh keeps below 3,000 metres at all times. If he does go higher, he will need to carry oxygen. Having consulted the RAF on his behalf, I have advised him to file a flight plan prior to departure and install an identifying transponder. In any event, so long as he shows no hostile intent, I am assured he will be escorted safely into UK airspace.

Comment: the Met Office informs me that the temperature in Finnish Lapland at 6pm last Christmas Eve was -20C. In London, it was -1C and in Glasgow -2C. The patient is clearly at considerable risk of hypothermia and frostbite.
Recommendation: Warm clothing is essential. The British Mountaineering Council tells me he should wear six layers of clothing, including three inner layers of thermal insulation and an all-in-one down suit; three pairs of gloves; three pairs of socks and plastic boots; a tubular scarf; and a balaclava, hat and hood.

Comment: Mr Claus says he enjoys a glass of whisky in each house he visits. (There are over 7 million households with children in Britain alone.) While he feels the alcohol could help reduce his risk of heart disease, I consider the consumption of several million units of alcohol in one night makes severe intoxication inevitable and death a serious possibility.

Recommendation: The patient has been advised to have "none for the road" and, even when not driving, to limit his intake to four units a day. Given his obvious alcohol dependency, this will be a struggle but counselling is available. Mr Claus may wish to drink Coca-Cola instead but he should be aware that each 330ml can contains the equivalent of seven teaspoons of sugar.

Comment: Mr Claus's occupation carries considerable risks: exposure to soot in the chimneys through which he frequently descends can cause skin and lung cancers as well as ulcers on the corneal surface of the eye; climbing up and down roofs and chimneys presents obvious risks of falling; and back trouble could result from lifting a heavy sack of presents.

Recommendation: the Health and Safety Executive warns that work at a height exceeding two metres requires either scaffolding or firmly secured ladders. I have therefore advised Mr Claus to enter buildings only by the front door. (If he insists on using his traditional route, goggles, a face mask and hard hat will be essential.) Attendance at a training course on safe lifting techniques is also recommended.

Comment: on Christmas Eve, Mr Claus has to complete a heavy workload before a fixed deadline. Stress and fatigue are inevitable, increasing the risk of irritability, mood swings, errors and accidents.

Recommendation: the patient should tackle his stress by taking up meditation or yoga. The colour red can cause an increase in heart rate and blood pressure so he should consider changing his coat to a more relaxing blue. He should spread his workload over several nights or, better still, change to a daytime shift.

Comment: Mr Claus is required to work in close proximity to large numbers of children in air-conditioned shopping malls. This increases the likelihood of colds and flu.

Recommendation: given the patient's age, a flu vaccination is advisable. He should also increase his immunity by regular moderate exercise (this will also help him lose weight) and taking a vitamin supplement.

Peter Baker



DR PHIL HAMMOND

EastEnders has come in for a bit of stick with Bianca and Ricky's abnormal baby dilemma but, from what I have seen of it, the observation and dialogue have been superb. "What do we do? Kill this one and keep the next? Keep getting rid of them until a good one comes up? I don't feel we have the right to make a choice." In the end they did, deciding that a child with a combination of spina bifida and hydrocephalus was more than they could cope with. That was

Folic acid - the agony of ignorance

a few episodes ago, but their guilt will last the lifetime of the soap.

This isn't helped when a doctor points out that the baby probably would have been healthy if Bianca had taken folic acid supplements before and during pregnancy. Since it wasn't planned, not a single supplement passed Bianca's lips. At present, preventing your baby from having a crippling disease is only an option for those couples who map out their future family on a Psion organiser. And there aren't many of them in Albert Square.

EastEnders has a proud tradition of newsy health storylines (Mark's HIV, Peggy's breast cancer, Jo's schizophrenia) but it has taken them six years to pick up on folic acid. Way back in 1991, the Medical Research Council's Vitamin Study Group announced that the incidence of neural tube defects such as spina bifida could be reduced by 75 per cent if all pregnant women took

400mcg of folic acid each day from three months before conception to the end of the 12th week of pregnancy. It was an amazing discovery that has achieved virtually nothing.

Professional and public awareness remained low and by 1996, a pitiful 9 per cent of women had even heard about folic acid. This spurred the Health Education Authority into a very expensive advertising campaign (remember Zoe Wannamaker and the retreating sperm?). Six months later, a large survey found that although 93 per cent of women had now heard about folic acid and 71 per cent of mothers took it at some stage during pregnancy, only one in 10 took it from week 12 - the time needed for it to be effective.

At present, a thousand couples a year suffer the trauma of miscarriages and late terminations and 150 give birth to se-

verely handicapped children, most of whom would have normal spines but for a short course of a cheap, safe, water-soluble vitamin. Health education in itself will continue to achieve nothing whilst 35-50 per cent of pregnancies are unplanned. Even if all women ate more folate-rich green vegetables, the effect would be minimal because naturally occurring folate is hard to absorb from the gut and is destroyed by cooking. In raw form, you'd need to eat six pounds of sprouts a day to absorb the amount needed and you're unlikely to feel like sex afterwards.

In 1996, the US Center for Disease Control recognised that health education and over-the-counter tablets would never deliver a significant reduction in neural tube defects (NTDs), especially since their prevalence is greatest among the young and poor who don't plan pregnancies and are less aware

of health issues. American food manufacturers were ordered to add folic acid to flour and a variety of staple foodstuffs as the only realistic chance of prevention. This comes into effect from January 1998.

In the UK we're much more reticent about adding things to the food chain. But folic acid is already added to 15 per cent of breads and 50 per cent of cereals, although it would take 12 slices or four bowls a day to prevent NTDs. Adding enough to flour so that everyone got 400mcg from, say, two slices of bread would not affect the taste of meet objections from millers. Neither would it be expensive - the money wasted on ineffective health education could have funded the programme for several years.

There is one argument against fortification - a very rare but potentially serious neurological side effect of folic acid can occur in elderly people with un-

treated Vitamin B12 deficiency. However, there is also a strong association between folic acid intake and the prevention of heart disease, which is likely to be of far more benefit to the elderly. If this proves to be the case, fortification is the only humane option. Although NTDs are rare, affecting only 0.3 per 1,000 live births, it is presently only abortion that prevents them from being 10 times as common. Folic acid is a far kinder and cheaper form of prevention, with the added benefit that you have a healthy baby at the end. For those who did the research, the knowledge that 7,000 pregnancies have since ended that could have been saved, and a 1,000 children with spina bifida could have had normal spines must be hard to take.

Today Helen Brinton MP tabled an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons calling for the addition of folic acid to flour

VITAL SIGNS

A delicate balance

Doctors cannot get it right. Either they are accused of patronising patients by withholding information or they are accused of avoiding responsibility by overloading them with it.

An illustration of the problem comes from researchers in Hull who interviewed patients with terminal cancer about how satisfied they felt with the information they had received about their illness.

One quarter of the patients were frustrated that the doctor

avoided the word "cancer", but an almost equal number (18 per cent) wanted "less frightening words used such as tumour".

Justin Gore, one of the researchers, who presented the findings to the winter meeting of the British Thoracic Society said: "Even where honesty is the policy and experienced doctors are at hand, it is very hard to deliver bad news to patient and meet individual needs."

Diabetes on the increase
Cases of diabetes are set to dou-

ble worldwide over the next decade. A study by the British Diabetic Association published in Diabetic Medicine estimates that there are 123 million with the condition in the world today and that this number will grow to 220 million by the year 2010.

Asia and Africa will feel the brunt of the rise and Asia will be home to 61 per cent of diabetics in 2010. Professor George Alberti, vice-chairman of the Association and president of the Royal College of Physicians, said: "This research paints a very bleak picture. It is vital that attempts to change lifestyle are stepped up and that investment in finding a cure is increased."

Seeing double

The average amount spent on spectacles was \$57.14 last year, down from £92.57 the year be-

fore, despite the growing popularity of designer frames. The total number of contact lenses sold doubled from 25.8 million to 47.2 million but most of the increase was due to the growth in sales of disposable lenses. There were 14.6 million sight tests, just over half of which were carried out on the NHS.

Embarrassing evidence

Embarrassment can be a fatal condition. In the case of cancer of the bowel, there is evidence that embarrassment is sending thousands of patients to unnecessary deaths, covering up low standards and keeping the cancer out of the public eye.

Cure rates for bowel cancer vary widely between hospitals and between surgeons, and lives could be saved if treatment were concentrated in the hands

of the best, according to new guidelines issued by the health department.

Bowel cancer killed over 17,500 people in 1996 but, unlike most common cancers, is completely curable if caught early. Its curability is linked to the fact that it remains localised until relatively advanced. If the cancer is removed completely there is a good chance it will not recur. However, only a minority of patients get ideal treatment.

Diagnosis is frequently delayed because patients are embarrassed to consult their GPs about the early signs, such as blood in the faeces. Most who need surgery are operated on by general surgeons who do not have the specialist skills necessary to ensure all the cancer is removed.

The guidance, sent to all

GPs, Health Authorities and NHS Trusts, says studies in Scotland show that survival after five years varies from 20 per cent to 60 per cent depending on the surgeon carrying out the operation. One hospital had twice the failure rate of others. The low overall survival rate is linked with the advanced stage of the cancers at diagnosis.

It says surgery should be restricted to those surgeons who show good results with low recurrence rates. The best results, which halve the risk of the cancer recurring, are achieved by a complex operation involving meticulous dissection of the tissues surrounding the rectum. Known as Total Mesorectal Excision (TME) it requires specialist training and is currently carried out by only a "limited number of surgeons".

Radiotherapy given before surgery reduces recurrence rates by up to 40 per cent but patients who get radiotherapy tend to have it after surgery when it is less effective, lasts longer and causes more damage to other tissues. Chemotherapy increases survival by 6 per cent.

The guidance is based on a review of research by the NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination at the University of York. Arabella McVie, chief author of the review, said: "The variations in treatment are much more serious with this cancer than with others. But it doesn't have a high profile. It is not something people want to know about. Thousands of lives could be saved every year by following this guidance."

Jeremy Lawrence

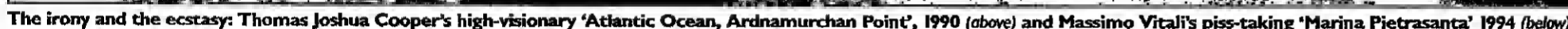
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The Photographers' Gallery

'Worth seeing? Yes; but not worth going to sea' (as Dr Johnson very nearly said). Tom Lubbock contrasts the sea-pictures of two photographers whose work appears oceans apart.

The film *Waterworld* raised an interesting problem about representing the sea. The film's premise was that sea levels had risen so high that ocean covered the whole planet. Water was literally everywhere, there was no more land, everybody was a sailor – a frightening thought. The problem was

that the scale of this new Flood couldn't be directly pictured. Sure, they could show the sea stretching away to the horizon in all directions; but when you're in the middle of it, that's how the sea looks anyway. *Waterworld* couldn't supply the eye with any more water than the average dolphin-movie. The

sea always looks infinite. Its immensities are a pictorial cliché.

There's a good deal of sea in Thomas Joshua Cooper's pictures. This American photographer, resident in Scotland for a long time, has 10 years' work now showing at the Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh, with the title "Where the Rivers Flow", and there's a good deal of river here too, and rock. But it's the sea pictures that take the strongest hold. They're not enormous, but they fill the eye and the mind.

Cooper's sea doesn't look infinite in the normal way, and the reason is simple enough. The horizon is kept out of the frame. The sea fills the scene. The limits these photos dwell on aren't the horizon's vanishing lines; rather, the land's edges. They're all taken on shore or just off-shore, at extreme points of coastline – the westernmost points of Europe, say, around Cape St Vincent in Portugal, or the northernmost points of Scotland, Ireland and Wales, or on the English Channel, or the far reaches of the Scottish islands.

Rocks rise and waves break, but they aren't views, strictly speaking, and their sense of scale is uncertain. It's the sea, its surface, its depths, its movement, that makes the going. Take an image like *Atlantic Ocean, Ardnamurchan Point*. A mariner or a hydrologist might be able to say what was going on precisely, but what the viewer sees is a ferment of swelling, breaking water. A slow exposure has allowed the foam to streak into a field of flames – flames that lick over the surface like a petrol fire – which rises to a vortex of maximum intensity in the centre of the picture, emanating a kind of light-halo; and, beyond that, there's obscurity, in which (if you look closer) the approaching waves are stroked in dark-on-dark with a beautiful fine-brush delicacy.

Elsewhere the water writhes and twists like muscles under skin, or lies hard and grooved like the face of the moon, or becomes an abyss of smoke or a desert struck with flashes and bursts. Beyond the effects of slow exposure, Cooper's tones and textures are worked up in the printing with

rare precision (though I'm not sure that I quite believe that halo). The pictures are generally sombre, and their dim illumination—evening, early morning, sometimes moonlight—unifies them; but it's remarkable how, with such narrow contrasts, they achieve such clear resolution. It is a masterly touch at work. One can hardly avoid talking the language of painting or etching. The sea is made into its own abstraction, or, at any rate, is getting high visionary treatment.

It seems important to say something about how Cooper operates. These photos involved a lot of trekking and wading, armed with a big 100-year-old box camera and a tripod; a long period of watching and waiting, sometimes waist-deep in water; and then a single picture is taken, with exposure times that are never snaps and can last for hours. I give this information, with its intimations of ritual—quest, solitude, meditation, unique act—as everyone who writes about Cooper gives it, although myself not quite sure that to make of it. It offers background support for the images' intensity, but, having read it into them, you can read it back out! You're conscious of the duration

of the exposures, yes, though generally they're not that prolonged, and every photographic image implies a photographic act of which one can be vaguely aware. But with Cooper's work the two seem in fact to be peculiarly divorced, because of the great proportion of the picture-making done in the studio.

I feel a similar thing about the sense of place. Again, photos generally make you think of their real location more keenly than paintings do, and these are charged sites that Cooper visits, indeed the ends of the earth – intimating the limits of a culture, or the beginnings of a great expansion. The title of one sequence, portraying the sea off the Isle of Lewis, is *At the End of the World (The Edge of the Celtic World)*. Another: *The World's Edge. Remember: Magellan – The Atlantic Ocean, Five Capes – Portugal (The Edge of the Renaissance World)*.

So the titles indicate. And yet the actual sense of place is weak. You rarely feel that here is offered an impressive sight you might see yourself (landmarks are few). Nor, on the other hand, that the photographer's sharp eye has made a strange formal *monnaie* that plays against the

real subject (the sort of transforming find that might occur in an Edward Weston sea-view). But just this seems to me Cooper's strength. He doesn't have that sort of sharp eye, nor an eye for the simply dramatic. His sea is treated abstractly, visionarily, but in a way very objectively. It's the same thing: with the sea, abstract and concrete, subjective and objective are one. These pictures are true because they are immersed.

But no doubt they want something more, a resonance that their charged place names and ritual procedures point to. They want to be an epiphany of the sacred. I too feel in an obscure way that the sea should be revered, but without treading too far down mystical or transcendental ways; and I'm reluctant to praise work for believing things I don't. Suffice to say that there's great intensity of attention here, and an opportunity for it in the viewer too, and that's value enough.

At the Photographers' Gallery in London, you can get another view of the sea, from the Italian photographer Massimo Vitali. It adopts, in almost every way, the opposite angle. Vitali's camera is set up in the sea, but

turned on to the beach – on beaches packed with baskers and bathers and strollers. These huge, high-angled colour pictures set out wide panoramas of modern seaside leisure, with their patterns of little encampments of parasols, loungers and spread towels. (Beach life is a beginners' exercise when you study Demography.) The effect can't help being ironic.

Certainly an overflowing beach isn't my idea of fun either, and one can well agree that collective relaxation is a very rule-bound affair. But these pictures are too dependent on the simple observation that people enjoying themselves tend to look silly or helpless when you can't see what it is they're enjoying. And what's missing from these scenes – deliberately removed, by turning the view round – is their real focal point: the water stretching out before them. People don't just go to the seaside to get hot and wet. They go to be in the strengthening presence of the sea. It's no good taking the air.

Cooper: to 10 Jan, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh (0131-225 2385). Vitali: to 17 Jan, Photographers' Gallery, London (0171-831 1772).

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I had to sell myself but not be a prostitute

REVELATIONS

THE TIME: 1996

THE PLACE: MAYFAIR

THE MAN: JEAN-CHRISTOPHE NOVELLI - CHEF AND RESTAURATEUR

I was the chef at the Four Seasons Hotel in Mayfair - a good secure job - but I felt I had the potential to do more. I woke up one morning and knew my wheels were spinning in mud. Instead of going to work, I went to visit my friend Marco Pierre White in his restaurant. We sat down for coffee and he saw there was a problem straight away. "Jean, you should start your own place," he advised.

My problem was that I didn't have any money. But Marco knew somewhere for sale. "It's the perfect place for you," he said. We went for a dinner of goat's cheese and steak to a part of London I had never been to before - Clerkenwell. When I saw the environment, after Park Lane, I thought he was joking! It was called the café St Pierre and not at all upmarket; I felt like jumping from a plane. After a long chat, Marco convinced me to come back in daylight at lunch time. The next day I returned and the area was busy with city types, although the café was quiet.

I asked Marco why he had been so convinced about the place. He told me that 10 years ago he had been the head chef there. We managed to knock a third off the price of the sale. Unfortunately, NatWest offered me only 70 per cent of what I needed so I had to think about a partner. Thank goodness I decided against the idea because for just £40,000 somebody would now own half of my business. (My company is worth £3.2m after just 18 months.) I had to sell myself but not be a prostitute.

I was still at the Four Seasons; they knew nothing about the venture or they would have sacked me. So to raise the extra money I worked on a cross-channel ferry between Dover and Calais at the weekend. Five days a week I was one of the top chefs in the UK in a Michelin star restaurant; but on my days off I cooked egg, chips and beans! It is very difficult to work on a boat: I was sea sick, I couldn't stand up in heavy weather. But I had to do it because that money was just enough to buy the place. I never thought of giving up because I can absorb a lot of problems - that is my virtue. Finally I bought a lease for 20 years. But for the first three months I didn't have the landlord's consent. He wanted £20,000 guarantee to prove that I could pay the rent, but I didn't have the money. So he was waiting to see if I could pay - if not I would have lost everything.

I had been working in one of the most beautiful restaurants in London, and in my own place I had to use school tables and white metal chairs. I did not even have my name on the front because I couldn't afford the signwriter. I had a week's salary from my old job that I used for cash flow to buy wine and food. I was very lucky because three staff came for just £150 to help me. I said, "If you work, I'll give you shares." We suffered. I was working like a dog from early morning to late at night. In fact we slept there because the terraces were in the oven and there was preparation to do for the next day. At the weekend, I would clean and paint.

I had the same spirit, the same passion, the same love for food as I always had but I couldn't buy expensive produce. I had to go to the market and buy the most economical ingredients. Diners paid £150 a head at the Four Seasons but in my café-



'Everybody tells me that I have to look after myself but I swear that if I become bankrupt tomorrow I will shoot myself. I will never work for someone else'

Photograph: Glyn Griffiths

restaurant I used to provide the same concept in a much cheaper way. I was charging £3.50 for a starter and £6.95 for a main course. A month later I was almost bankrupt because my cash flow was low. I had some overheads I wasn't expecting and my takings were not high enough.

I'm willing to risk everything I've got but I knew that physically I was going to die; you can only work so hard. I was walking around thinking, "I'm finished". I told no one; I didn't want to discourage them. One Sunday I went to Covent Garden and drank a coffee in a café and on the table there was a newspaper. In it was an advert for a loan shark - quick money at a high rate of interest (22 per cent). I rang and pretended that I still worked for the Four Seasons and needed £10,000 to re-do my flat. Every morning I was checking the post, and there was nothing. A week later they sent me a cheque. I couldn't believe it. I've never cried in my life but I nearly cried that day. I said, "Thank God." That was my last bullet to survive. Even if one day I have £10 million in my pocket, I will never forget that cheque.

Shortly afterwards, a small man and his daughter came to eat and he asked me my name and complimented me on the food. He wanted to look around. I was frightened that he was a hygiene inspector! Finally, he said, "When you were the chef at the Four Seasons, I ate there. Today I didn't pay the same price but I can assure you the meal was exactly the same." I thanked him, he paid the bill and revealed that he was a jour-

nalist from *Time Out*.

When the review was published, there was a queue outside and not enough food in my fridge. I was fully booked and in one month my turnover grew to more than 10 times its previous size. From £4,500 pounds a week, I started taking £65,000, which was nearly the amount of my original loan from the bank. I got a result and I will never forget that excitement. However, the toughest moment is now. Eighteen months ago, I had only four staff but now I employ 100 people. Everything has become so large it is uncontrollable. It is hard, my name is 10 times bigger, but when I go back home to bed I am still a human being. I have to take a sleeping tablet and I wake up in the morning and become an animal.

If I do not have the fighting instinct I know I will die, so I have to be like that every day. On a Sunday, if I take time off, I become a zombie because my brain can't cope with being slow. Once I took off three days and I was ill, there was not enough adrenaline coming in. It's a very narrow world in the kitchen. The greatest people are more expressive but it is not a life. It is impossible, I promise you - it kills you. I have no interests except work and the time I spend with my girlfriend or my friends - especially Marco Pierre White. I don't go to the pictures. I don't watch TV or read newspapers. My life is a very strict and rigid formula. I don't get paid a wage, every penny goes back into the business. I don't care where I live. I could buy a house tomorrow but I still rent a one-bedroom flat. Money is irrelevant; I take cash out of the till if I need a taxi. I'm happy with nothing. Expressing myself and to prove a point is much more important. I'm happy but exhausted. I slept just four hours last night. I had a banana this morning but I haven't eaten all

Five days a week I was one of the top chefs in the UK in a Michelin star restaurant; at weekends I worked on a cross-channel ferry cooking eggs, chips and beans

day - just two litres of coffee and a pack of cigarettes. Everybody tells me that I have to be careful and look after myself but I swear that if I become bankrupt tomorrow I will shoot myself. I will never work for someone else. What has happened is unique. I don't want to regret anything. There is so much competition, it is like football and music. One minute superb, the next - out!

I don't want to go back to where I came from. Growing up in France was hard, my

parents didn't have any money. My mother caught polio in a public pond when she was only four. This was during the war. She was paralysed up to the neck and the whole family walked from the North down to the South to avoid the Germans. She has recovered to some extent and is now only paralysed to the hip but she could never ride a bicycle or drive a car. Her life was very limited and I was too hyperactive for her. As a boy, I nearly died. I would jump from the roof of one house to another. I fell and my jumper caught on a nail sticking out of the gutter. My friends pulled me up by the neck and nearly strangled me. I just had to risk things. I would knock myself against walls. I was completely crazy. At school I couldn't stay at my desk and always had to speak so I was put on tablets. One day they actually tied me to my chair because I disrupted the class. I used to hate the routine. Finally, aged 10, I was sent to the transition class for people who are thick. I was there for four years; but I wasn't thick. I was disturbed. I didn't know how to express myself.

We lived near a bakery and every morning when I went to school I used to see the lights in the basement and would stop to watch the men working away in their white coats. I liked the smell and the warmth. I started working in the bakery at weekends from 6am until 11 at night. But one day there was a terrible accident. The apprentice got crushed in the blender, they couldn't stop him being dragged in and he

died. After that I was not allowed to go back. Times were tough and I was misunderstood; I was thrown out of school, they told me I was wasting my time. I was 14. I am lucky, but the reason I am successful is not that I am a good chef or have a good formula, it's because I persist and I don't worry. For my French National Service I was trained as a blue beret and sent to the Lebanon. It was very intensive. I learnt to be myself under pressure.

I had a million reasons to close up and push the keys under the door of my first restaurant but I did not panic. I now have six places, four in London and one in France and South Africa. I have paid for everything myself. Next year I have my own television series and I will be featured on a commercial for Sea France, the cross-channel ferry I previously worked for, promoting their gastronomic menu. I've learnt a valuable lesson - the importance of being accessible. I'm very excited about introducing top-level food to people who've not been able to afford it before. London is becoming the European gastronomic city and I know I have to improve or I will be back where I started. But I've survived a lot - it has to be something much bigger to destroy me.

Jean-Christophe Novelli's restaurants include Maison Novelli, Novelli W8, Novelli EC1 and Les Saveurs de Jean-Christophe Novelli.

Interview by Andrew G Marshall

A recipe for a crumbling ego

Eventually the food was fine, but the marriage was left red raw. When it comes to dinner parties, says Melissa Nathan, that's the way it has to be.

A cold aunt of mine used to say, "You can read, you can cook". At the start of a cooking session I always find this wonderfully inspiring. It's only an hour later, with an aching back, flour in my eye and one failed attempt already in the bin, that I remember the old hat was totallyarking. And that I detest everything about cooking.

I hate deciding what to make, shopping for ridiculous amounts of bizarre ingredients and then turning my kitchen into a warzone for a meal that takes five minutes to devour. So the Other Half and I live on simple, quick, unimaginative meals. But when it comes to dinner parties, there's a right and a wrong way to do things. The right way is to get flustered, angry and violent over a hot stove while telling your Other Half it's alright for you, all you have to do is pour the wine. It's known as Scratch Cooking - or

in my kitchen Scream Cooking - and call me a traditionalist but that's the way it should be done. The Other Half vehemently disagrees. He thinks we should buy everything pre-cooked, pre-packed and preposterously expensive.

So when he invited a new friend from work - plus girlfriend - to dinner one Saturday evening, we'd done the legwork on this familiar row so many times we were able to leap in halfway through. Quite sweet really.

"I am now spending the day with you in a foul mood, so we'll buy it all," he said firmly. He'll never forget my amazing sinking scones ... flying towards his head!

"Don't be ridiculous," I snapped even more firmly, "you don't invite people over to humiliate them."

We compromised. We went for a simple starter - steamed asparagus with hollandaise sauce (shop-bought) and garlic bread (shop-bought) followed by a baked pasta dish - made by Other Half on the day - followed by apple crumble made by me the day before. That way I'd only be making one easy dish. What

could possibly go wrong?

Well, let me explain. I got up at seven on Friday morning. I got all the crumble ingredients out. I rearranged them. I took the recipe book out. First horror-filled moment of the day. I realised that this recipe was just

'He'll never forget my amazing sinking scones ... flying towards his head'

a basic guide, full of phrases like "if your recipe states..." I felt a knot of anxiety form in my stomach. I rearranged the ingredients. I took a deep breath. The guests weren't expected for another 36 hours. I'd cope. I'd do what any other mature adult would do in the same situation. I called my mother.

"You have to help," I said dramatically. "It's my dinner."

"Thank God," she said, "I thought it was important."

"It is important."

screamed. I am without a crumble recipe. I realised I'd stopped breathing. "Do you have one?"

"No," she said apologetically. I've never really used one. Crumble is foolproof."

I began to make small whimpering noises and picked absently at the sugar (soft dark brown) while a tear welled up in my eye (sally).

"Read it to me," she said calmly.

I read it out in full.

"That's a recipe," she said.

"What more do you want, semaphore?"

There was a long pause.

"OK. Bye."

I put the phone down. Mothers can sometimes find it hard to let go.

I mixed together the ingredients in a bowl - and then ate half of it. Why does it always taste so much better raw? I put it in the oven and within 40 minutes the smell wafted up the stairs where I was getting out of my shower.

A minute later, the knot was back in my stomach. Other Half and I were examining the crumble intently.

"It's burnt," I whispered.

"No it's not," he lied firmly.

"I burnt it. I failed at the foolproof crumble. I'm crap. I'm going to have to make another one. It's alright for you, all you have to do" etc...

At that point Other Half went out for the afternoon to save our marriage. While he was out, I thought more butter and started again. This time I crouched in front of the oven and watched it cook. It wasn't just a load of ingredients in there, it was also my self respect.

Oh yes, plus my sense of humour and sense of proportion. When it came out, I quality assurance tested so much of it that it looked like a ring doughnut. But it tasted good. I decided to serve it in the kitchen.

By the time our guests came, Other Half and I weren't talking. I always find that adds a certain piquancy to a dinner party. But amazingly, the food was OK. Or maybe our guests were just polite.

"I'm so impressed you didn't just go out and buy it all," said Tim. "If you came to us, it would all be shop-bought, you know."

Other Half froze. I laughed gaily. "How delightful," I trilled. And meant it.

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A true story that puts the police in the dock



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Here is a true story, drawn from recent weeks. A youngish man went to his office Christmas party at a West End club. He had a few to drink, but left at around 11pm, reasonably early because there were young children at home, so he expected to be woken early. Sensibly, he wasn't driving, and set off in search of a taxi cab.

Just as he stepped out to cross the road a car came shooting past, and a siren suddenly blared out. He jumped back from the kerb in alarm, and, unwisely but not entirely surprisingly, shouted a foul-mouthed curse at the rapidly receding vehicle.

The vehicle was a police patrol car. As the man walked off, its driver scooted round a side street, eventually pulling up a little ahead. A large police officer jumped from the passenger side and marched up to our party-goer.

"Just wait here, my mate wants a word with you," the police officer said. Whereupon the officer driving the car emerged,

walked up, and started jabbing his finger towards our friend's chest. Our friend was not daft, and had not drunk so much as to be unaware that he should remain conciliatory. Which he did. But the police officer did not. He culminated his rant by declaring: "If you're not careful I'll have you down the station in a cell and really sort you out."

Astonished by this, our party-goer turned to a passing woman, and asked: "Did you hear what he just said? Did he say what I thought he said?" "Yes, indeed," she replied, "and I'm as astonished as you."

"Would you mind coming the police station and helping me file a complaint?" "Not at all," she replied, and off they went.

At the station, the party-goer then attempted to tell his tale. The attention he received was cursory. He demanded to see whoever was in charge. The officer who came in suggested that he'd had a bit to drink, and that in the cold light of day he might change his mind. It wasn't until the

party-goer pointed out that he was a trained lawyer, and was determined to pursue his complaint, that the officer started to take it seriously.

When this story is told among normal, law-abiding people in London, none of them express surprise. Amazingly, they regard it as perfectly normal. And that is perhaps even more shocking than the event itself. Expectations of the behaviour of Metropolitan Police officers are appallingly low. People are very well aware that far and away the majority of police officers, even in the metropolis, are decent human beings who exercise enormous restraint and skilled judgment in the face of all kinds of stress and provocation. But it is virtually impossible to find a London citizen who has not had some bad experience or other with the Met. It is as common as being driven demented by the miseries of the Tube, or fed up with right-wing cabbies. It's part of the life of the city. And it shouldn't be. In truth, it's a scandalous state of affairs to have - as we reported exclusively this morning - the largest police force in the country receiving 10,000 complaints from the public, leading to only 20 officers being disciplined. Of course, many of those complaints are diversions; they come from criminals and trouble-makers who want to cause problems for officers who are doing their duty as best they can. But that simply cannot account for the difference between 10,000 complaints and only 20 officers disciplined. It is too shockingly wide a gap to be explained in anything other than the obvious way: that officers get away scot-free, that members of the public are deterred from pursuing complaints, and that corruption and misbehaviour are swept under the nearest filing cabinet.

Every time that happens to a legitimate complaint, public faith in the police is undermined. Police forces cannot with one face encourage the public to come forward and help them in their often difficult task,

while with another refuse to countenance the possibility that some of their colleagues are either nasty, or rotten. And it is no excuse whatever to say that some of the bad officers are shuffled away to retirement on health grounds. Far too much of that kind of evasion happens in the public service; it undermines accountability, and fails in the crucial objective of bolstering public esteem.

London (and the rest of Britain, indeed, but the problem is particularly acute in the capital) need police forces they can trust. Sir Paul Condon knows this, and knows that he needs to find a way of rooting out the 250-odd officers he believes are corrupt.

Obviously, tackling corruption matters more than common civility. But if any officer thinks it is acceptable to threaten to beat anyone up in a cell, whether or not they have committed an offence, he should be out of the force without ado. And he seen to be dismissed, too.

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number. Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

LETTERS

Now build on Kyoto

Sir: The climate change treaty hammered out at Kyoto was a political breakthrough. For the first time, a statutory global protocol mandates industrial nations to cut emissions of the six main greenhouse gases within a definite period. Countries like the US, the world's worst climate polluter and implacably opposed to any such agreement beforehand, were forced to compromise.

But it's not nearly enough. To stabilise climate change and sea-level rise, protect vital forest and other life systems along with heavily populated coastal regions, cuts of between 60 and 80 per cent must be achieved within 50 years.

Next year is critical, for ratification and first-step implementation. The two are linked. The US Senate is threatening to veto the treaty, arguing it will be bad for the economy and that newly industrialising countries, like China and India, should agree their own cuts.

The UK has another vital leadership role to play to overcome these hurdles, by demonstrating that cutting emissions is good for the economy and people. Friends of the Earth, using EU economic forecasting models, has shown that meeting the UK's carbon dioxide reduction target of 20 per cent by 2010 can create up to 225,000 new jobs, through affordable domestic energy conservation measures, renewable supply (off-shore wind, wave, solar and combined heat and power) programmes, reducing traffic levels and building up a modern public transport network.

The Government must back the Road Traffic Reduction Bill before Parliament, and implement the policy, green taxation and public expenditure needed. As employment and profitable green technology export opportunities materialise for the UK and Europe, while emissions fall, the US and others will see it is worth following suit - or risk losing market share and competitiveness. Essential and much tougher reduction targets will then be easier to negotiate at future climate summits, using Kyoto's legal foundation.

CHARLES SECRET
Director, Friends of the Earth
London N1

Sir: For the world to agree a single accord on anything as nebulous as climate is remarkable.



Unfortunately the result is a late-20th-century affirmation that colonialism rules.

With the plan for trading in emissions permits, the United States has badgered the rest of the world into accepting a new commodity for marketing, a new way for them to extend financial hegemony over economies struggling to emerge.

Most third world countries have difficulty developing their economies for the benefit of their own populations because they are struggling to pay off debts they have been seduced into by the developed nations. Now a new form of selling their seed corn - their ability to develop industry - has been invented which will ensure that they will only continue to be able to develop at the rate the US allows, since the US will decide whether or not to dangle the carrot of more foreign exchange in return for their greenhouse gases.

Which now is the evil empire? DAVID CHOAT
Shepperton, Middlesex

Sir: Nicholas Schoon's reporting has been a model of its kind. Rightly he points the finger of blame at the multinationals and governments which are so largely responsible for failure to reach a more meaningful agreement in Kyoto ("Getting warmer, but still a long way from our goal", 12 December).

The best way to show our deep disgust is to hit them in the pocket. I am sure that I shall not be alone in boycotting products of Esso, Mobil and other members of the notorious Global Climate Coalition.

JDHNN GDRDDN
London N6

Labour vs 'Today'

Sir: Your report "Labour at war with Today" (13 December) on the exchange of letters between BCC Radio's John Barton and Labour's director of communications, David Hill, after the Harriet Harman inter-

view raises worrying questions. Not least, who is answerable to whom?

A minister's salary, like the whole apparatus of government, of whatever party, is paid from the public purse: minister and government are answerable to the public on matters of public interest. This should have nothing to do with party politics.

Mr Barton, and all members of news media seeking official access to ministers on matters of policy, should bypass Mr Hill and go straight to the civil servant responsible. If this turns out to be one and the same person, as seems to be Peter Mandelson's aim, that person should be under obligation to act as civil, rather than party, servant.

It is grotesque that a party official should take it upon himself to decide when government members should or should not appear to answer questions on policy. The party news management view is ob-

viously that a press release be printed and read an air, commentators say "Oh, how wonderful," and leave things at that.

GWYNNE POWER
Covebury

We're no fat cats

Sir: Before your readers are swept along by any superficial comparison between barristers and hospital consultants or other professionals ("Lord Chancellor attacks legal aid fat-cats", 10 December), they might bear in mind that hospital consultants, out of their £70,000, do not have to pay their support staff, do not have to rent and service the hospital buildings and equipment, do not have to market their services, do not have to buy and maintain efficient accounting systems to obtain payment, do not have to fund their own sickness insurance and pensions, and have some security of employment.

The fact that a number of very hard-working and exceptionally able barristers may obtain very high receipts in one calendar year does not alter these facts. I write as a barrister who gave up criminal work because the responsibility and anxiety involved were out of proportion to the general level of fees.

EDWARD CROSS
London WC1

Risks of life

Sir: Professor Margaret Brown (letter, 10 December) calls for wider debate about the mathematical skills we should be teaching our children to prepare them for citizenship in the next century.

A recent report prepared for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (*Children's Mathematical Understanding of Risk* by Michael Barnett and Richard Noss) has shown how children are ill prepared for con-

sidering the mathematics of risk, and how a richer mathematical curriculum which includes the study of probability might be exploited to educate children in the assessment of risk.

What a shame then, that the Government's drive for basic "numeracy" continues to displace ideas like probability from the primary mathematics curriculum in favour of basic numerical skills.

RoSPA recommends that risk assessment should be regarded as a life skill to help effective decision making to control risk in any context, whether it is eating a T-bone steak, having casual sex or crossing the road.

MARTIN GOMBERG
Education Adviser
The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
Birmingham
RICHARD NOSS
Professor of Mathematics Education
University of London

Invitation to burgle

Sir: You report on "the simple way to stop burglary" (8 December). However, local government has given the burglar the ability to target thousands of homes that people have to leave empty when out at work.

On the day refuse is collected, householders have to place a large wheeled bin on the pavement, and retrieve it after collection. We have to leave a large "please burgle me" sign on the pavement outside our homes until we return at the end of the working day.

The Government should make local authorities revert to the old system of the refuse collector bringing the bin out and returning it as part of the service.

I BROOK
Pontefract, West Yorkshire

Paper garden

Sir: Should you recycle? (report, 6 December). Not always. As a company involved in composting green organic waste it is a question we take seriously. Large centralised sites composting in excess of 30,000 tonnes a year are questionable from an environmental perspective. Smaller schemes, bearing in mind the proximity principle and working in conjunction with farmers, almost always make environmental sense. Recycling of paper and glass in theory should make sense, but in practice will depend on the variables. The best way to deal with poor-quality paper and thin card such as cereal boxes is to compost them in the garden. They are an excellent source of carbon and mixed in with grass cuttings will improve the carbon-to-nitrogen ratio, helping to provide a good compost.

CHARLIE TROUSDELL
KPS Composting Services
Ravens Heath, West Sussex

Movable feast

Sir: I noticed with some astonishment this week that Sainsbury's are selling hot cross buns. Are they making the excellent point that Christmas is inseparable from Easter? Or does postmodernism mean that we now pick and mix the symbols for our festivals? Next year perhaps we could have Maypole dancing on August Bank Holiday, and two minutes silence on 4 July.

Dr NIGEL VAUX HALLIDAY
Liss, Hampshire

'What are these tidings when they're at home?' 'You are going to have a baby, Mary,' he said



MILES KINGTON

This is the season when we receive family newsletters from all round the world telling us what has happened to them in the last year, in remorselessly jolly detail. We may mock, but they do a good job as family bulletins. In fact, imagine how much easier the Christmas story would be to take in, if only the Virgin Mary had had the time to sit down and send everyone a special Christmas newsletter...

From Joseph and Mary and new baby Jesus. Hello, all, and what a year it's been! Probably the last time you heard from us was when we went off suddenly to Egypt but we're back again now and

dying to get back into the daily round. Egypt was one place we never thought we'd get to! I'm not saying it wasn't a nice change to be in Egypt - though we never did get to see the pyramids! - but going all that way with the baby and just a donkey, well, it isn't really my idea of fun. Still, if the alternative is to have your baby taken into so-called "care" by King Herod, what can you do?

I do seem to be rattling on a bit, don't I? (Incidentally, you may have deduced by now that "I" is Mary and not Joseph! Poor old Joseph has cut his hand in an accident in the carpentry shop and can't write.) It all started this time last year when Joseph and I

were just another engaged couple, as I suppose we still are. We were living with my mother's people in Nazareth and I was all alone at one day, when there was a knock on the door and this enormous man came in. I was a bit scared but he seemed very nice, not a bit like the normal travelling salesman.

"Is the gentleman of the house?" he said.

"No," I said, "he is round the back working on a pulpit for the Pharisees." I should say that Joseph has been doing very well with his woodwork this year even though now he is kept busy on new cribs for the baby!

"Good," said the man.

"Fear not, for I have come to talk to you, O Mary, and to bring you good tidings."

"Get away!" I said, even though he spoke so posh, because you have to deal with these people sharply. "What are these tidings when they are at home?"

"You are going to have a baby, Mary," he said.

"Don't come near me!" I said, at which he smiled in a funny sort of way and said, "And it will be the son of God," and then he sort of vanished. Well, I told Joseph about this later, and we laughed and laughed about it, but then I was talking to my cousin Elizabeth (she has probably mentioned this in her

annual newsletter) and she had been approached by the same visitor who had told her that she was going to get pregnant too, and she did, even though she was miles too old to have a baby! So when I found I was going to have a baby, it all fitted together in a crazy sort of way, and anyway Joseph was too busy to be jealous because then we suddenly had to all go off to Bethlehem for this tax business, which I didn't understand myself however often Joseph explained it.

I wanted to stay with his folks while we were there but he said it would be difficult to explain to them why I was eight months pregnant and us

not married, and he would prefer it if we stayed in the inn. Of course, the inevitable happened and there was no room to have the baby in the stable, with all the horrible oxen and asses spreading their germs all over the place. I have never been so humiliated in my life (not till we had to leave at short notice for Egypt!) but things got a bit better when three charity workers or something like that called in with presents for the baby, and we were able to spend some gold on better quarters - but really!

He is a very good baby and has never cried once, which is a bit worrying, I suppose, but he smiles so nicely you can't

get cross with him. All sorts of people come to see him, so I suppose he really is special, but your own baby always is special anyway, so it makes no difference to me. He doesn't look a lot like Joseph, and I have no idea if he looks like God, but he is my baby and that is the main thing. He was already talking at six months, and the first thing he said was not "Mummy" or "Daddy", but "There are many rooms in my father's mansion", or something like that. Wasn't that odd? I wonder what it meant?

Anyway, see you all soon! Joseph says "Hello!" and Baby Jesus says "Blessed are the meek." Bye for now!

Geoffrey Robinson need not, and should not, resign



**DONALD
MACINTYRE
ON CURBING
TAX AVOIDANCE**

Have the Tories helped to save Geoffrey Robinson? The Opposition has defied the political folklore which says that by calling for a minister's resignation you make it much less likely that he will go. The more Peter Lilley and John Redwood, not to mention *The Daily Telegraph*, seek Mr Robinson's head on a charger, the less palatable would it be for Tony Blair to let him go, even if he wanted to. The stronger the pressure, the weaker it looks to yield to it.

This is nevertheless an episode that Blair could have done without. To have the complex financial affairs of the millionaire Paymaster General splashed across the front pages while you are cutting lone parents benefit, and your ministers are failing to make a very convincing case for doing so, is, on the face of it, about as nightmarish as things can get for a left-of-centre government.

Mr Robinson's colleagues have spent quite a lot of time over the past 24 hours explaining that he has become the subject of a press feeding frenzy. Certainly John Major damaged his government woefully by letting the Murdoch and Black press between them dictate what he did. But the Labour Party cannot escape all the blame for the frenzy; you can't, day after day in Opposition, fight to ensure that the private affairs of public figures are treated as a legitimate matter of public comment, and then complain when exactly the same happens when you are in government.

It has also been particularly unfortunate that Robinson, as the beneficiary of an offshore trust, is a Treasury minister, a big player in a department committed to doing something serious to reduce tax avoidance. If Robinson had been at - say - the Foreign Office, there might not have been such a fuss. It was unwise for the Treasury to put up Robinson, rather than Brown, to announce the Government's decision to transform the regime on tax-free savings. At the very least it is a serious embarrassment, rather as Harriet Harman's choice of a grammar school for her son was an embarrassment; it worries some arsy stalwarts, infuriates others; and it exposes the leadership to the charge that it subscribes to the age-old parental principle of "Don't do as I do. Do as I say."

The question is whether it is more than that. Blair has so far taken the firm view that nothing has so far come to light which suggests that it is. The Prime Minister likes Robinson - which isn't surprising because most people who deal with him do. His weekend interviews demonstrate that he isn't exactly a masterful champion of his own cause. But he has a lot of charm.

Robinson is a good minister. Blair, as well as Brown, trusts his judgement on quite

a wide range of issues. He was extremely helpful in ensuring a smooth passage for the windfall tax among the utilities. (On the windfall tax he had been a hawk, arguing that the Government could have reasonably taken more out of their profits than they actually did.) John Prescott has welcomed his close co-operation in the Public Finance Initiative. Finally every Labour government - almost always underpowered in its knowledge of business - needs its millionaire businessman. Wilson's was Harold Lever. And every government, of whatever colour, would be the poorer without a brilliant buccaneer or two.

None of these, in themselves, are sufficient reasons for Robinson to stay. There are however, two rather better ones. The first is a paradox: Robinson's continued presence at the Treasury makes curbs on tax avoidance more, rather than less, likely. There is no reason for challenging his publicly expressed view over the weekend that he is personally arguing within the Treasury for further measures which might be to his personal detriment.

But second, even if he wasn't making the case himself, the current fuss has at least ensured that his mere presence is a guarantor of action. This doesn't mean that Gordon Brown isn't deadly serious about fulfilling his Green Budget pledge to tighten up on avoidance. There is no reason why one-off capital sums, as well as regular income, received by British citizens from offshore trusts shouldn't be taxed. But it won't be easy: the law is desperately complex and there are big vested interests to take on here.

To the scams in urgent need of abolition catalogued here yesterday by Polly Toynbee, I would add just one: widespread avoidance of inheritance tax by the rich. "Billions of pounds", said a Labour document before the election, "are held in trusts principally for tax avoidance". Just imagine the headlamps that would greet Brown on Budget Day next March, if with Robinson at his side, he announced that the Government still had no firm plans to start recouping it.

The other is that whatever else Robinson has done, his financial dealings appear to have been irrelevant to his conduct as a minister. One of the reasons why the Opposition is on such weak ground is its own record of protecting politicians - such as Neil Hamilton and, for too long, Jonathan Aitken - whose private conduct was relevant to their political life. By contrast they have not yet been able to show that Robinson's financial affairs have affected his conduct as a minister.

There is an important caveat here. Robinson's explanation has so far been rather like the answer given by Norman Lamont when, more than a decade ago, in very different circumstances, he was pressed to account for his famous black eye: "complicated but innocent". If anything came to light which fatally undermined that, and therefore his fitness to be a minister, Blair has left himself just enough room to demand his resignation. Robinson would certainly have done better to disclose more from the first - about the date of the trust's formation and its subsequent share dealings - than he did when its existence first came to light. His original reticence is one of the reasons why the affair has damaged the image of a very image-conscious government. But on the known information, he has done nothing illegal as a private citizen and nothing improper as a minister. Unless that picture alters Blair is right to keep him.

Farmers should look to customers rather than politicians



**ANDREAS
WHITTAM
SMITH
FARMING THE
TAXPAYERS**

Should we feel sorry for the beef farmers? We would not sympathise with a pharmaceutical company if it put a faulty medicine on to the market; we would be angry. But in the topsy-turvy world of agriculture, it is the producers who are angry and the customers who are sorry.

In many moods I don't have much regard for the beef farmers. We subsidise them in more ways than we know. Whenever we go shopping and buy anything upon which VAT is levied, say, a CD player at Dixons, a part of the tax we have paid goes, via a European budget, into the pockets of farmers.

Then, when we visit the butcher's shop, we are paying, without realising it, prices that are far higher than they need be. There is a steep wall of high tariffs around the European beef market. Even in the protected North American market, beef prices are 20 per cent lower than they are here - as anybody who has been to a restaurant in the United States recently will have noticed. If there were free trade in beef, it wouldn't be highly priced Irish supplies that angry farmers would be throwing into the sea, it would be Australian beef, undercutting British prices by some 40 per cent or so.

I will grant that farmers' incomes are quite volatile. But if you look at the accounts of the nation's cattle and sheep farms, you find that last year an average farmer had a revenue of about £48,000 from a market that is rigged in the farmer's favour, and in addition received subsidies totalling £27,000 from taxpayers. From these receipts of £75,000, the livestock farmer had to meet costs of some £57,000, leaving £18,000 net farm income. If you go back 10 years, and adjust for inflation, you find that the long-term trend of farm incomes has been stable.

Let us be clear what this means for a group that speaks the language of dependency much more vociferously than any lone parent, or any out-of-work youngster or disabled



Looking to government: farmers deliver meat on the bone to Downing Street yesterday

Photograph: Rui Xavier

person. Unlike millions of other people, livestock farmers have work, have income, have amenities.

Yet listen to what they say. Sir David Naish, the chairman of the National Farmers Union, goes to speak to a group of farmers in the Midlands and feels that he must tell them a truth "which we cannot ignore". What is this revelation? "That consumers are all-powerful, and our future depends upon their willingness to buy what we produce". Surely, farming is the only business activity in the land where the people involved have to be reminded that they do in fact have customers.

"The Government are killing our industry," shouted a protesting farmer recently. No, it is the other way round. Given the risks to health which BSE poses, it is the farming industry which has been trying to kill us.

Broadly, the message from the farming community is: "whatever happens, you, the taxpayer, must look after us and keep us in business by one means or another". Sir David Naish even complains that farmers receive no reward for activities such as landscape management and environmental enhancement. Show me the enhancement. We are still losing hedgerows. And have not set-aside payments been a re-

ward for doing exactly nothing?

How the British coal-miners must wish they were as well treated as British farmers. When the pound sterling commands a high rate of exchange against other currencies, the farmers demand compensation and, sooner or later, they obtain it. When the same exchange rate has the effect of pricing British coal out of foreign markets, there is no help. The Government could distort the energy market to prevent natural gas from driving coal out of power stations, but it hardly lifts a finger. Coal-miners will go on losing their livelihoods. Yet governments continue to fix agricultural markets for the benefit of farmers.

Will they go on doing so? Beef farmers are entitled to have their doubts. Perhaps they are not, in the end, going to avoid the day of reckoning which shipbuilding workers, steel workers, and coal miners have confronted, long delayed though it has been. Beef consumption per head has been dropping since the early Eighties, long before the BSE crisis. A switch to convenience foods has reduced demand; health considerations have been a negative factor for many years; and poultry has become relatively much cheaper. Now the downward trend in demand is even steeper.

At the same time, the methods which European governments have used up to now to take surplus supply off the market may no longer be effective. New rules for world trading make it more difficult than it once was to subsidise exports to the Middle East and elsewhere. It is also becoming harder to maintain high tariff protection of the European market. Governments can put excess beef into cold storage and let a beef mountain build up again, but they are not enthusiastic about doing this at a time when public expenditure is tightly constrained. Calves could be slaughtered in great numbers to reduce the size of herds, but public opinion is likely to be hostile to such barbarity.

This is why European governments are beginning to wonder whether they should adopt a radically different policy. Instead of supporting beef prices in order to protect farmers' incomes, they would let prices drop by 35 per cent, or whatever is required to equate with

the world price, and pay compensation direct for the loss of income. But the British Government, for one, has said that it could not meet the whole bill. In other words, without a recovery in domestic demand, beef farmers are in real danger.

One way of seeing the threat is to consider what would be the consequences of a scenario in which agriculture was not a highly protected and subsidised activity. British dairy farmers would survive, and probably build up a good export trade in milk and milk products. The substantial amount of beef that comes from dairy herds would continue to be available. Large-scale cereal production would remain profitable.

What would disappear would be livestock-rearing in the hills, and the way of life that goes with it. Unfortunately indeed. But then, there is no more tin-mining in Cornwall, or shipbuilding in Birkenhead, or cotton-spinning in Bolton. Occupations was and wane. It is the natural order of things. Farmers should understand.

Decoding the enigma of the sudden emergence of the male torso



**LOUISE JURY
NAKED TRUTH**

He stands there on his shelters and advertising hoardings, with his finely-toned torso and his naked washboard stomach. Yves St Laurent man as the epitome of masculine beauty.

In the Diet Coke break advert, women crowd round the window for their morning fix of watching the hunky specimen of working labourer on the building site below.

John Menzies' newsgatherers report that Street Boys, its calendar of attractive boys, is out-selling its popular girlie title, *Girls, Girls, Girls*, by two to one. Simon Smith, of the calendar manufacturer Scandecor, reports that its *Power of Man* calendar of men in jeans and beachwear outsells any of its girlie rivals.

The naked male torso is everywhere. In the past, men's magazines had pictures of beau-

tiful women and women's magazines had pictures of beautiful men. No one had beautiful men. But when *The Face* and *Arena* imported an interest in style and clothes from gay culture into the Eighties mainstream, man as model finally began to make it into the limelight. Today, he is as likely to be decorating the hoardings as any of his female counterparts.

"I think there has been a dawning realisation that men's bodies can be sexy too," says Richard Myers, a creative director at Saatchi & Saatchi advertising agency.

The Nineties male, of course, is a fitter class of manhood than his Sixties or Seventies predecessor. The gym can be seen clearly etched across his chest. Even better, the muscles are the result of his mountain cycling or soccer-playing (not quite so narcissistic as sweating away on the weights).

So the office slob now faces the tyranny of comparison with Mr YSL and Messieurs January to December. That's a lot to live up to. There is some evidence up to. There is some evidence that men are feeling the pressure. Around one in 10 victims of anorexia and bulimia is male, according to the Eating Disorders Association. Just as women have faced images of stunning supermodels for generations, the new wave of glossy

magazines for men is engendering a similar kind of paranoia. "There is evidence that a bit shallow to say that women like pictures like that the more unhappy you are with yourself," says Dr Jill Welbourne, a specialist in eating disorders.

But, boys, worry not! Please don't take it seriously. Young women just want a giggle. Simon Smith said he certainly thought most women bought their calendars for their daughters or other women for a laugh. "It's done very tongue in cheek."

Mary-Ann Stephenson, of the Fawcett Society, the women's equality campaigners, says more widespread images of semi-clad men are one consequence of women's greater financial independence. "As women without children have more money today, they can spend it on what they want," she says. More advertisements are aimed at women because they are buying for themselves and not just for the household. Girl power has won women better jobs, more cash and a cheering array of beefcake for utilitarian.

But the prevalence of sexy male imagery is also a result of a freer society. "Women have become more upfront about their sexuality," she says. "It used to be said that women didn't like looking at men's bod-



ies because they're much more interested in their personalities. Perhaps women thought it was a bit shallow to say that women liked looking at nice men. There has been a change from that." In real life, women are not necessarily looking for men to be a provider. "In your fantasy world, perhaps you want a millionaire, you want a sexual object," she suggests.

Of course, not all these ads are aimed at women. Andy Medhurst, a media studies lecturer at Sussex University, points out it is much more acceptable these days even for straight men to express an interest in clothes and fashion and the body. The fascists of Italy and Germany in the 1930s made much of the cult

of the beautiful young male body, notes Dr Ruth Ben-Ghiat, a cultural historian at Fordham University in the US. "It's about the man as conqueror and it's about discipline. If you have a finely-tuned body it's a sign that you're in control of yourself. Mussolini would strip off his shirt at every opportunity to show his muscles."

Such images are very exclusionary to women, she says, to the point of misogyny. Their preponderance today may even be an attempt to reassure male power. "There's been a lot of disappointment among males at the dawn of feminism and women in the workplace and women becoming fit themselves. Right now there are also a lot of ads that show women as being strong sporty figures - that must be very threatening for men."

Curiously, many women would rather see men fully dressed; though men raised on the promising allure of the long leg and the plunging neckline may find this hard to believe. Fiona McIntosh, editor of *Compass* magazine for twenty-something women, is currently sitting the candidates for its 50 most eligible bachelors awards. They are all being photographed with their clothes most definitely on. "Guys in underwear don't do anything for me," she says. "I'd much rather see a guy in what he would wear normally, to show his sense of style."

Oliver James, author of *Britain on the Couch*, says if women really were buying pictures of naked men in calendars and magazines, this would be an intriguing shift. All attempts at selling women porn have failed, and the female sex has never before been turned on by isolated bits of bodies as men are. Could this be sign of a significant change?

"Over the next 50 years, we're going to find out whether given unconstrained free choice, women start behaving like men. Will they start shagging for the sake of a shag rather than for a relationship?" Probably not, I think we may be misreading the signs. Much has been made of *The Full Monty*, the story of six jobless steelworkers who turn strippers. Its success has exceeded even that of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. But the true pleasure of *The Full Monty* has nothing to do with the final striptease. It is a classic male bonding movie, an over-the-top comedy with gritty-British-humour film. Its success has nothing to do with the attraction of men getting their kit off. I mean, they actually look rather silly at the end, don't they?



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FINANCIAL JOURNAL OF THE YEAR

Acer of Taiwan to create 1,000 jobs in Wales despite row over 'poaching' between regions

The Government yesterday attacked what it claimed were 'wild and unsubstantiated allegations' that Wales was engaged in turf wars with English regions to poach inward investment projects.

The outspoken comments, by Ron Davies, the Welsh Secretary, came as a Taiwanese computer giant announced plans to create 1,000 jobs near Cardiff. Chris Godsmark, Business Correspondent, reports

Acer, which claims to be the world's third-largest manufacturer of personal computers, has chosen a 20 hectare site on the M4 corridor east of Cardiff to build a factory making colour monitors.

The company said it would invest £25m at the plant over five years in two phases and would inject £5m of working capital. It would ultimately have capacity to make 2 million monitors a year. Work on the first stage in the project would start in January, with the first monitors rolling off production lines in August.

Acer had examined a location north of Newcastle, and a site near its existing operations in the Netherlands, but insisted the subsidy package on offer in Wales was not the main reason for choosing Cardiff. It pointed to the site's two-hour driving distance from Heathrow Airport and the fact that some of the UK's leading plastics suppliers were located in a 10-mile radius of nearby Newport.

Mr Davies said the project brought to an end "a great deal of unhelpful and inaccurate speculation about Acer's intentions and allegations that we have 'poached' the project from other parts of Britain".

However, both Mr Davies and the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) refused to reveal the level of state aid offered to Acer. The WDA is building the factory, which will be leased to Acer, reducing the cost and risk for the company. Other help includes work to create approach roads and spending on training for employees.

The row over subsidies exploded in

October when Sir George Russell, chairman of the Northern Development Company, publicly accused the Welsh Development Agency and the Welsh Office of poaching investment projects. Animosity intensified last year when Wales was picked over Tyneside by Lucky Goldstar of Korea for its £1.6bn investment programme.

Sir George, who could not be contacted yesterday, told the North East Chamber of Commerce that William Hague, the former Welsh Secretary, had "gazumped" ministerial colleagues and accused him of a "blatant disregard" of the rules.

Following the speech, some Tyneside MPs had joined the row, claiming the Welsh Development Agency had been able to gazump any aid package offered to Acer in the North-east.

It emerged last night that the Cardiff site should have been eligible for smaller grants than Tyneside because, according to the regional assistance rules, it was considered to be in a less deprived area. Unlike the Tyneside site, the Welsh location does not qualify for the highest level of regional assistance grants.

Though he did not name Sir George, Mr Davies yesterday said he was glad the project had not been damaged by "wild and unsubstantiated allegations by some organisations and individuals". Rhodri Morgan, MP for Cardiff West, went further, accusing Sir George of acting in an "aggressive and unprofessional manner".

The Welsh Development Agency added that it had received complaints from several companies which had already invested in Wales about the arguments, which were damaging the UK's prospects for attracting future funds.

Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, has attempted to end the gazumping row by suggesting the Department of Trade and Industry should act as a clearing house for all inward investment projects. The issue is still being discussed by ministers.

Meanwhile, Honda unveiled plans to invest a further £60m at its Swindon plant in preparation for a new version of the Civic model and the replacement next year for the Accord saloon range. The cash, which brings to £460m the amount invested so far, would create 400 new jobs, taking the total workforce to 3,000.

Inward investment - How the regions have fared



Ron Davies

WEST MIDLANDS			
FIRM	COUNTRY	MONEY	JOBS
Jaguar	USA	£370m	6,000

WALES			
FIRM	COUNTRY	MONEY	JOBS
LG	Korea	£1.7bn	8,100

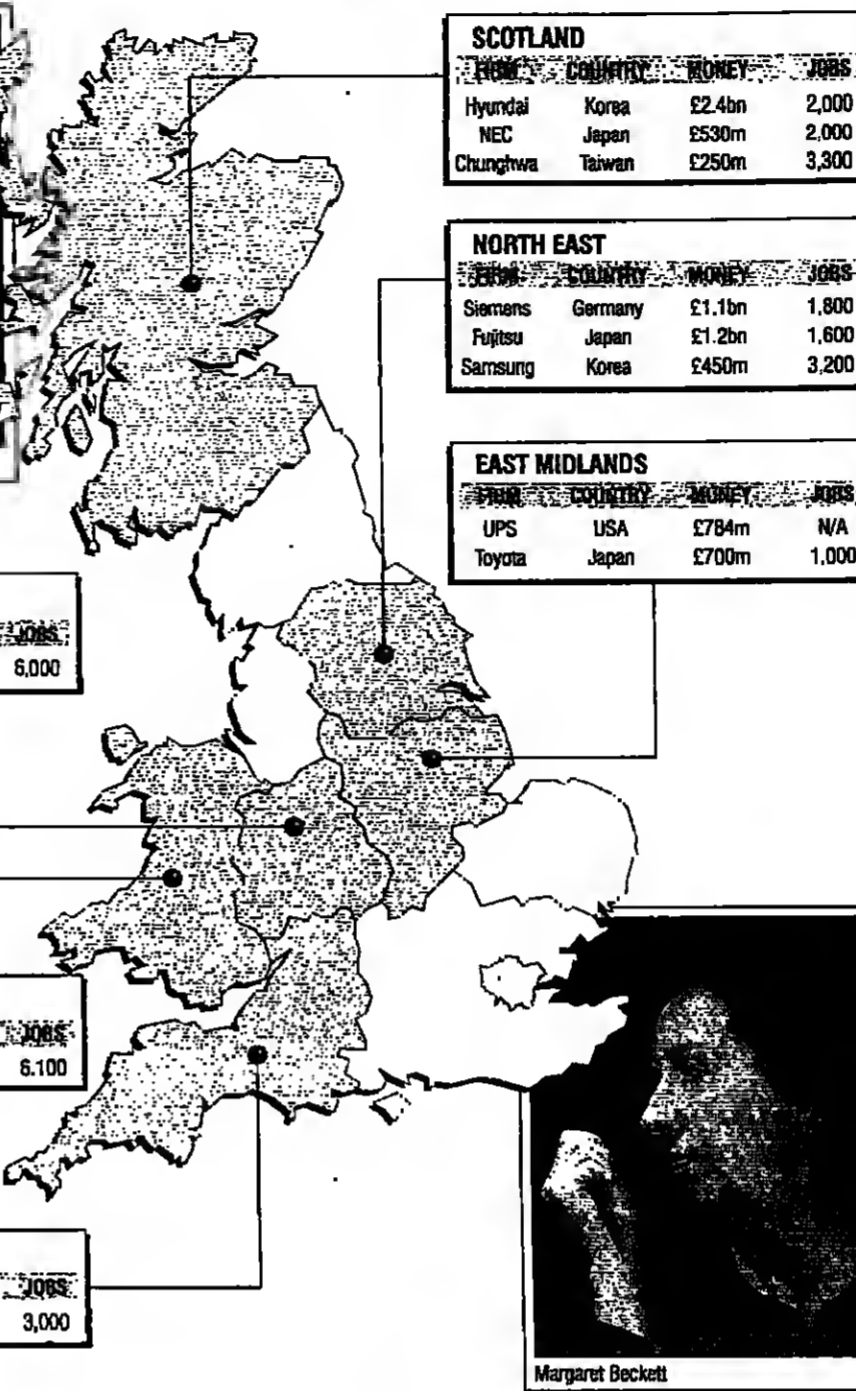
SOUTH WEST			
FIRM	COUNTRY	MONEY	JOBS
Honda	Japan	£460m	3,000

Source: DTI/Honda

SCOTLAND			
FIRM	COUNTRY	MONEY	JOBS
Hyundai	Korea	£2.4bn	2,000
NEC	Japan	£530m	2,000
Chungwa	Taiwan	£250m	3,300

NORTH EAST			
FIRM	COUNTRY	MONEY	JOBS
Siemens	Germany	£1.1bn	1,800
Fujitsu	Japan	£1.2bn	1,600
Samsung	Korea	£450m	3,200

EAST MIDLANDS			
FIRM	COUNTRY	MONEY	JOBS
UPS	USA	£784m	N/A
Toyota	Japan	£700m	1,000



Margaret Beckett

MFI revamp leaves up to 1,000 jobs at risk

MFI Furniture, the kitchens and bedrooms group, is to cut several hundred jobs over the next 18 months in an attempt to improve efficiency. The company plans to close the in-store warehouses at its 186 branches and replace them with 12 larger warehouses which will deliver goods directly to customer's homes.

Up to 1,000 jobs are at risk at the in-store warehouses, though MFI said many staff would be re-deployed at the new home delivery centres. Some jobs at the group's head office in Colindale, north London, have already gone and more may be cut.

MFI is making the changes to reduce costs and make its delivery system more efficient. It will sub-let the in-store warehouses space to other retailers.

The new efficiency programme will also see all MFI stores converted to its MFI HomeWorks format by mid-1998. These include a broader range of household goods such as kitchenware and textiles. Some 15 per cent of product lines will be stripped out with ranges such as upholstery and cheaper cabinet furniture are under review. Instead the stores will focus more on higher margins kitchens and bedrooms which it manufactures itself.

John Randall, chief executive, said: "The business is going through a process of major change and we aim to improve retail profits and focus on areas of potential growth."

He was speaking as MFI announced an 8 per cent increase in first-half pre-tax profits to £35.4m. The company said it had only experienced a windfall factor boost to sales in the North-east of England, following the flotation of Northern Rock earlier this year. But it said customers were trading up to more expensive kitchens. Its average kitchen sale is now over £2,000, excluding fitting costs.

First-half figures were affected by the £3.5m costs associated with closing its German operations this year and increased losses in France due to the weak economy. The company said the key to its full year would be the 10 weeks following Christmas.

— Nigel Cole

Investment column, page 20

Treasury claims summit breakthrough on coal as generators agree new deal

The Treasury last night claimed to have achieved a breakthrough in the coal crisis by persuading the power generators to bring forward delivery of coal stocks next year. But as Chris Godsmark explains, the Treasury's attempt to broker a solution to the coal crisis has privately met with scepticism from the generating groups.

Geoffrey Robinson, the embattled Paymaster General, held talks lasting four hours with Richard Budge, chief executive of RJB and the heads of the three big coal fired generators, Keith Henry from National Power, Ed Wallis from PowerGen and John Devaney from Eastern Group.

The generators had hoped to hear details of the Government's plans for a three month stay of execution for looming pit closures, which could involve up to 5,000 job losses. The proposals, revealed by Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, last week, would involve the generators building up bigger stockpiles of coal after existing long term supply contracts with RJB expire at the end of March.

A Treasury statement last night said National Power and Eastern Group, which have already signed new contracts to buy around half their current order from RJB, had

agreed to "accelerate deliveries" of coal between April and June.

The statement added: "Arrangements for coal deliveries up to the end of June 1998 have been agreed. This gives the Government the opportunity to carry out the wider ranging reviews on Energy policy it has put in hand."

Officials said National Power would bring forward delivery of 350,000 tonnes between April and June. This represents a limited concession compared with a total order of 8 million tonnes. Eastern would accelerate delivery of 250,000 tonnes, compared with contracts to buy 4 million tonnes a year. National Power confirmed it had agreed to "facilitate" the deal.

PowerGen, which has yet to conclude negotiations with RJB, had agreed to buy at least 1.1 million tonnes from the coal producer. Mr Wallis, PowerGen chief executive, had previously warned he could buy all his coal from abroad. The Treasury said the new deal would be "at a price acceptable to both parties."

Another element to the agreement involves RJB extending redundancy terms to workers from April to June which offer more generous compensation packages. The current redundancy deal, agreed at privatisation, expires with the coal contracts at the end of March.

The Treasury said RJB would "use this period to continue to reduce operating costs and to improve their competitiveness. Any increase in pithead stocks in the April to June period will be financed by RJB."

John Redwood, the shadow industry secretary, yesterday accused Mr Robinson of "bungling" by intervening in coal contracts which should have been left to the private sector to sort out.

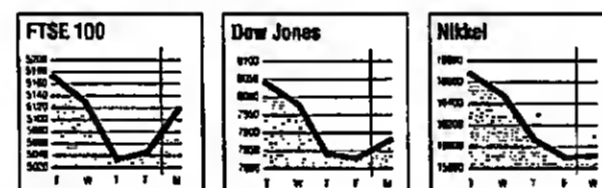
He continued: "Miners will not be grateful for a very temporary stay of execution which serves only to delay and cut their redundancy money." Mr Redwood said the Treasury should stop interfering and leave energy policy to the energy minister, John Birt. "Geoffrey Robinson should stand aside," he said.

An RJB spokesman said last night that it was unlikely to press ahead with pit closures until the three month deal ended next summer. By then the group, which bought British Coal's English pits on privatisation three years ago, hopes to have gained contracts to supply coal to Spain and Germany. The government has been lobbying to persuade other European countries to buy UK produced coal.



Geoffrey Robinson: Deal brokered after four hours of talks

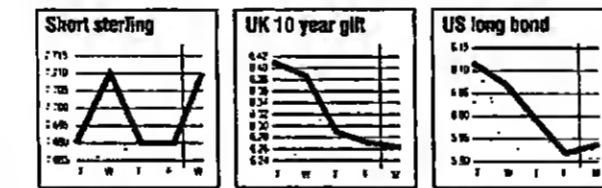
STOCK MARKETS



*Dow Jones index and graph in Time

Indices	Close	Change	Change(%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	5121.80	76.80	1.52	5387.30	3933.90	3.44
FTSE 250	4753.00	5.10	0.11	4963.80	4347.30	3.48
FTSE 350	2462.00	30.30	1.25	2570.50	1858.10	3.35
FTSE All Share	2403.11	27.65	1.16	2507.68	1940.45	3.35
FTSE SmallCap	2256.90	-0.70	-0.03	2407.40	2127.50	3.46
FTSE Hedging	1253.90	0.90	0.07	1346.50	1202.20	3.42
FTSE AIM	974.20	-0.80	-0.08	1138.00	845.00	1.11
Dow Jones	7985.05	38.54	0.49	8299.03	6236.05	1.73
Nikkei	15909.39	5.09	0.03	16910.79	14966.13	0.97
Hong Kong	10455.15	-179.51	-1.68	10820.51	8775.88	4.97
Dax	4061.04	-22.56	-0.55	4459.89	2797.54	2.00

INTEREST RATES

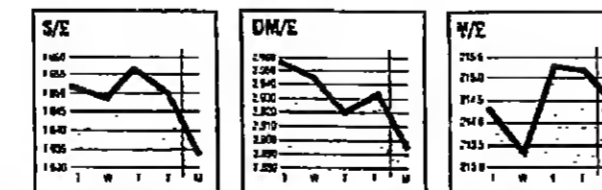


Money Market Rates	3 months	1 yr	1 yr chg	15 yr	1 yr chg	Long bond	1 yr chg
UK	7.72	1.33	7.76	0.87	6.26	1.35	-1.57
US	5.91	0.36	5.97	0.21	5.74	-0.83	5.94
Japan	0.76	0.31	0.71	0.14	1.89	-0.76	2.53
Germany	3.75	0.51	4.04	0.74	5.29	-0.58	5.85

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Falls
Coats Virella	Denise Bus Sys
Sears	BTP
Barton	Oxytech Int
Barclays	Park Grp

CURRENCIES



Pound	at 1pm	Change	1 yr chg	Dollar	at 1pm	Change	1 yr chg
Dollar	1.6341	-1.62c	1.6837	Sterling	0.6120	+0.00p	0.6011
D-Mark	2.8945	-0.15p	2.5774	D-Mark	1.7713	-0.20p	1.5510
Yen	214.47	+0.23	189.83	Yen	131.25	+0.01	114.08
£ index	103.70	-0.10	93.20	\$ index	106.30	-0.10	98.10

OTHER INDICATORS

at 1pm	Close	Chg	1 yr chg	Index	Chg	1 yr chg	Next 1 yr
Brent Oil (\$)	15.84	0.07	23.13	GBP	113.30	3.80	109.70
Gold (\$)	285.55	2.60	368.25	RPI	159.80	3.70	153.91
Silver (\$)	5.96	0.18	4.83	Base Rates	7.25	6.00	

source: Bloomberg

SBC Warburg confirms bidding for Christie's

SBC Warburg Dillon Read, the merchant bank, yesterday confirmed it had approached Christie's about making a bid for the auction house on behalf of a group of anonymous private investors. As Peter Thal Larsen reports, the move would give Christie's the financial muscle offer guarantees to its customers.

SBC Warburg met Christie's advisers for the first time yesterday, after Christie's board decided on Sunday evening to proceed with the talks.

The bank is believed to have tabled a tentative offer of 300p a share, valuing Christie's at about £500m. However, this is understood to be an initial offer which may be subsequently raised. Christie's shares, which had risen sharply last week, fell 12p to 288p.

However, SBC Warburg last night emphasised that it was acting on behalf of a consortium of private investors rather than itself. Observers had earlier speculated that the bank might be considering a strategic move into the auction house business.

SBC Warburg said it would only proceed with the offer if it had the backing of Christie's board and had completed the necessary due diligence. The identity of the private investors will remain a secret until a final offer is agreed.

The bank is also believed to have guaranteed to retain Christie's existing management and the structure of its board if it consents to a bid.

Last night, Christie's appointed Merrill Lynch, the investment bank, as its joint stockbroker. Until yesterday, SBC Warburg had acted as sole broker to Christie's, but its involvement in the bid raised a potential conflict of interest. Merrill Lynch will work alongside Hamhros, Christie's existing adviser.

A week ago, Christie's revealed that it had received a bid approach which it had rejected as too low. Two days later, however, the company said it was considering a modified offer. SBC Warburg is understood to have made both offers. No other bidders are believed to be involved.

If successful, the bid will give Christie's the financial clout to win new business by offering financial guarantees to its clients. Customers are increasingly demanding that auction houses underwrite the proceeds of the auction.

Until recently, however, auction houses have lacked the financial muscle to offer those guarantees. Christie's main rival Sotheby's recently suffered a major loss when an auction it had agreed to underwrite failed to raise the necessary amount.

The success of the offer depends heavily on the support of Joe Lewis, the Bahamas-based British billionaire who owns 29.6 per cent of Christie's. He is understood to have agreed to swap his stake for equity in the new company. He will also help to underwrite auctions by putting up some of the necessary risk capital.

Bass sells bingo business for £279m

Bass continued the process of slimming down its main hotel and brewing operations yesterday when it sold Gala, the bingo business, to a management buy-in team for £279m in cash. The move ends months of speculation about the future of the 130 bingo halls, while raising investors' expectations that Bass is about to launch a large acquisition or share buy-back.

Analysts said the price tag, which includes £43m of cash balances in Gala, was slightly disappointing. "If they had made up their mind to sell last year they could have got more for it," said one. Like the rest of the bingo industry, Gala's profits have come under pressure from the National Lottery. In the year to last September Gala made operating profits of £24m. Bass shares fell 8p to 895p.

The deal will almost halve Bass's net borrowings, which stood at £550m at the end of September. Analysts calculate that the group can now afford to spend more than £2bn on acquisitions or returning cash to shareholders.

Bass refused to be drawn on how it would use the cash. But industry observers believe that the group would prefer to make acquisitions. "Bass' management are fairly sure they can spend the money more wisely than their shareholders can," one commented. However, he added that if the group had not identified a suitable target by the end of 1998 it would come under pressure to return the cash to shareholders.

— Peter Thal Larsen

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY SAMEENA AHMAD

MFI misses out on retail boom

It has been a tough year for MFI Furniture. In a period characterised by windfall payments, rising house prices and a revival of consumer confidence, the kitchen and bedrooms group has conspicuously failed to capitalise on the benign trading conditions. MFI shares have underperformed the market by 41 per cent this year and the fear among the group's critics is that if it cannot cash-in during sunny times like these, it will find it much harder next year as higher interest rates start to hit the high street.

To be fair to the management, there have been specific reasons behind MFI's underperformance. One is the closure of the German operations last year which cost £3.5m. The other is France, where the poor economic climate meant the division lost almost £3m in the half.

Given all that, the 8 per cent increase in half-year pre-tax profits to £35.4m is reasonable and the 8 per cent rise in first-half sales is encouraging. In truth, MFI is in something of a transition phase and there is a new determination among the management to make more of the assets at their disposal.

The plan is to squeeze more value from the integration between manufacturing and retailing, improve the sales mix towards higher margin, higher ticket items such as kitchens and bedrooms, while shaving back the cost base. This will mean job cuts as the group closes the in-store warehouses at 186 branches and replaces them with 12 "super-warehouses".

In the stores, up to 15 per cent of product lines will be stripped out, with ranges such as upholstery and cheaper cabinet furniture under review. The question is whether MFI is shifting towards higher ticket items at the wrong stage in the cycle and whether the reduction in product lines will reduce sales.

The key to MFI's year will be the 10 weeks after Christmas, which accounts for a third of group's sales. Assuming full-year profits of £85m-£90m

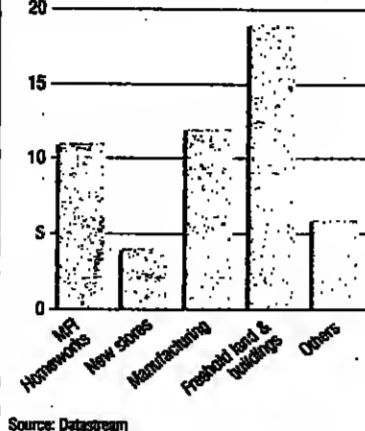
MFI Furniture: At a glance

Market value: £741m, share price 125p (+3.5p)

Trading record	1995	1996	1997	96/97	97/98
Turnover (£m)	720.7	766.2	845.6	440.5	475.5
Pre-tax profits (£m)	66.1	58.1	70.3	32.7	35.4
Earnings per share (p)	7.63	8.43	8.68	3.85	4.24
Dividends per share (p)	4.25	4.4	4.8	1.7	1.8

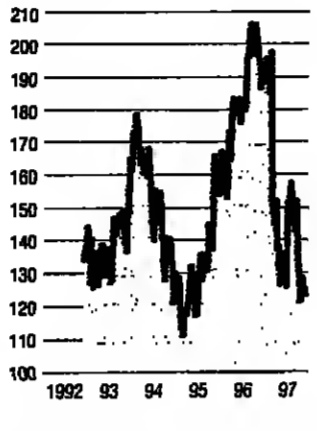
Capital Expenditure

1997/98 (6 months), £m



Share price

pence



the shares - up 3.5p to 125p - trade on a forward rating of 11. A discount to the sector but not one to chase just now.

Bio-tech shares out in the cold

Biotechnology shares? - you just can't give 'em away. Yesterday's crop of results was a sharp reminder of how bad things can get in the UK's unloved hiotech sector where disappointing news from heavyweights like Scotia and British Bio has left shares almost 50 per cent off their yearly highs.

Take ML Laboratories. Shares in this controversial group hit the top at almost 470p early last year, before taking a long slide. Full-year results yesterday left the price at 111.5p, down another 23.5p. Then there's the dis-

trous Aromascan. Technical hitches with this group's electronic nose have left its shares at a 30p low, down from 182p at the start of last year. Then there's Cambridge Antibody Technology. This very promising hiotech - albeit with a very young drug pipeline - which floated at 500p in March, finished yesterday 5p ahead at 375p after a full-year results, but close to their 350p all-time low.

That said, ML's fortunes are looking better. The group's tie-up with Baxter to sell Icodial, ML's kidney dialysis fluid, should start to bring in a steady royalty stream next year as Baxter will have its first full-year of sales in 16 European countries. With 80 per cent of the dialysis fluid market and Baxter pretty positive about Icodial, the income looks of reasonable quality.

ML's dry powder inhaler licensed to Medeva is being rolled out across Europe, which should mean more royal-

ties, and there is certainly an eager market for a good inhaler technology if that is what ML has. Other areas like Aids and cancer look more iffy. If the sector cheers up, as it might in 1998, ML could benefit. Wait for sentiment to improve.

World Telecom heads overseas

A company called World Telecom may sound like some huge American operator, with millions of subscribers and billions of profits. In fact, it's an AIM-quoted tiddler which only joined the market in March and is valued at just £57m. The group is just four years old, turned over a meagre £4m last year, and has yet to make a profit.

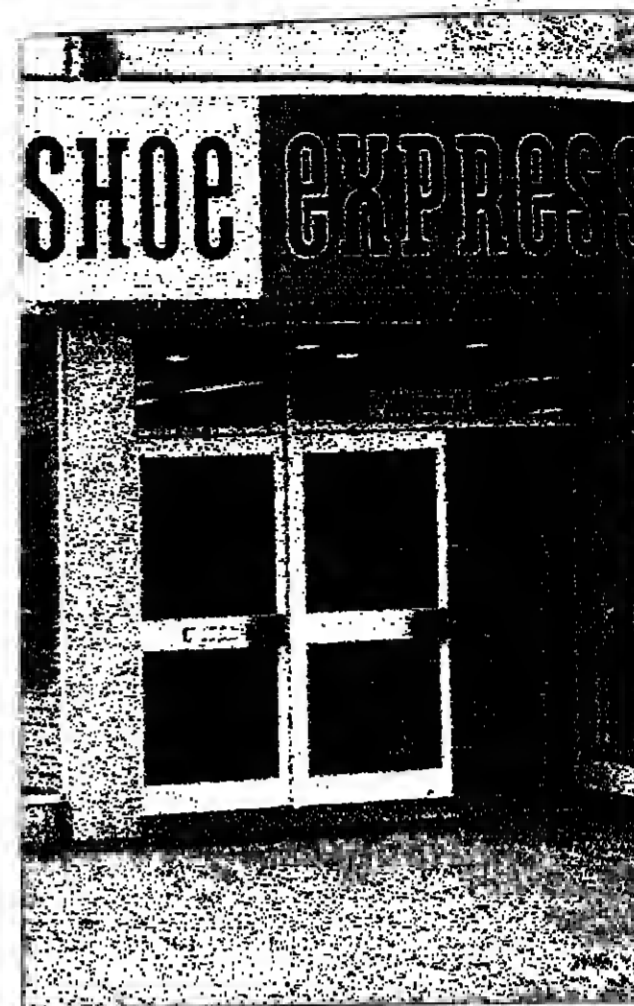
However, the name says something about the scale of World Telecom's ambitions. It sells prepaid phonecards and telephone chargecards which offer hefty discounts to the rates charged by established operators like BT. Customers include Arthur Andersen and - amazingly - BT, which issues the cards to executives to cut telephone bills when they're travelling. World Telecom also produces cards for the likes of NatWest who stick their own names on the cards.

This may seem like a low-margin business. But, crucially, World Telecom also has the technology to handle the calls made with its cards. This allows it to route calls to the cheapest lines available - making a healthy mark-up - and offer extras like voicemail and comprehensive billing. Overseas markets beckon. Yesterday, World Telecom announced plans to invest £1.1m on a similar service in Spain, Germany, Italy and France will follow shortly.

All this should mean explosive growth: house broker Collins Stewart forecasts sales of £30m in 1998, with pre-tax profits of £1m after a £2.5m loss in 1997. The risk, though, is that World Telecom is squeezed as larger players muscle into its market. The group says it is number one in the opposition and able to stay ahead. But investors will have to see some hard numbers before pushing the shares - unchanged yesterday at 162.5p - any higher.

Sears sells Shoe Express stores at £33m loss

Philip Green, the retail entrepreneur, has taken a further step in the development of his mini-high street empire with the purchase of the Shoe Express stores from Sears. Sears will book a £33m loss on the deal but Mr Green is confident he can turn the loss-making stores around. Nigel Cope, City Correspondent, reports.



Philip Green said the purchase of Shoe Express stores would speed up the expansion of his Mark One chain

Mr Green is buying 185 of the Shoe Express branches though it is not clear if he will retain the trading name or continue to run them as shoe shops. Between 75 and 100 of the stores will be converted to Mr Green's Mark One format which specialises in discounted women's fashion. A study will be undertaken to decide the best use of the remaining outlets.

The deal means Mr Green, a former chairman of the What Everyone Wants clothing chain, now controls Shoe Express, Mark One, five branches of the Owen Owen department stores and a stake of about 15 per cent in Sports Division, the sports group which acquired Olympus Sports from Sears. Sports Division is due to float on the stock market next spring. Asked about his burgeoning retail empire Mr Green, said: "It's progressing nicely."

Mr Green has also been tipped as a possible buyer of Shoe City, Sears' loss-making out-of-town shoe superstores. "Anything's possible," Mr Green said yesterday.

However, he said there were no plans to integrate the disparate interests into a single group. Each will retain separate management. Mr Green said: "The entrepreneurial element is in acquiring the business and

knowing what to do with it when you've got it." He said the deal represented a short cut in his plans to expand Mark One. "To open 70 to 100 stores is two to three years work."

Alnery, a company controlled by Mr Green, is paying Sears £8.5m for £32.5m of assets. It will also manage the 136 remaining Shoe Express branches, which will be closed by Sears by the end of January. This will give rise to the loss of around 500 jobs.

The total cost to Sears of the disposal will be around £65m, slightly less than expected. Shoe

Express made losses of between £17m and £18m in the last year on sales of around £165m.

Shoe Express has been a disaster for Sears' management. The cheap, self-service format was derived from a successful US equivalent and hailed as a potential saviour of the group's footwear operations. Founded in 1992, Sears spent millions on store conversions and promotions but it failed to take off.

The sale means Sears has only Shoe City and Cable & Co. left to sell of its British Shoe Corporation subsidiary. Sears shares closed 2.5p up at 49.5p.

Diageo to start trading tomorrow after US clears deal

The £24bn mega-merger of Guinness and Grand Metropolitan cleared its final hurdle yesterday with the approval of US competition authorities. The condition is that Diageo must sell its Dewar's Scotch whisky brand and Bombay gin. Nigel Cope, City Correspondent, reports.

The deal's clearance by United States Federal Trade Commission means that shares in both Guinness and Grand Metropolitan will cease trading at today's close. Following the approval of the High Court which also came yesterday, shares in Diageo, the newly merged entity, will start trading on Wednesday. Diageo has six months to sell the Dewar's and Bombay Sapphire and Bombay gin brands in what is considered to be the

largest ever divestment ordered by the FTC. Each brand will be sold to a single purchaser with Credit Suisse First Boston, the investment bank, appointed to handle both deals.

A queue of buyers is expected for Dewar's, which is the market leading Scotch whisky in the US. It sold 2.7 million cases worldwide last year including 1.5m of the 9m cases sold in America. Likely buyers are expected to include Allied

Domecq, Seagram and Barchard-Martini. The price is expected to be around £600m-£700m. The sale of Dewar's was expected to be a condition of the merger's clearance as Guinness and Grand Met also control J&B and Johnnie Walker, America's second and third-ranked brands. The FTC's decision mirrors that of the European competition authorities which told Guinness in October that it would have to give

up the brand in Europe. Allied Domecq repeated its interest yesterday: "It's a brand that would be of interest to us but not at any price."

The Bombay Gin brands, which have been one of the fastest growing parts of Grand Met's drinks portfolio will fetch £50m-£100m. The brands sold 600,000 cases worldwide last year, just over half of which were in the US. Diageo already controls Gordon's and Gilbey's gin

as well as Tanqueray, America's leading premium imported gin. George Bull and Tony Greener, chairmen of Grand Met and Guinness respectively, said they regretted the sale of the two brands but pointed out that it was an achievement to take the deal to fruition just seven months and five days since it was announced. Diageo will rank as Britain's eighth largest company and the world's largest spirits group.

US sees surge in industrial output for November

The turbo-charged American economy saw a surge in industrial production last month. Official figures showed output up 0.8 per cent in November, keeping the year-on-year growth at a two-year high of 5.6 per cent. The gains were spread over a wide range of industries. The rate of capacity use in industry rose to 83.2 per cent from 82.9 per cent in October. Although the Federal Reserve is known to monitor these figures closely, analysts said the news did not make an increase in interest rates more likely. The Federal Open Market Committee, meeting today, is expected to leave rates unchanged because of the financial turmoil in Asia. However, if the economy keeps up its pace, fears of higher borrowing costs will return to the financial markets in the new year.

Sedgwick denies Aon bid

Sedgwick Group has been forced to issue a denial of a £1bn bid from giant US insurance broker Aon. Shares in the group rocketed after weekend press reports suggested a bid was in the offing. Despite the denial, shares stayed at a high of 151p, valuing the group at £811m, against a year low of 115p. In a statement, the group said: "Sedgwick confirms that no discussions with Aon have taken place during the past 12 months or are currently taking place. However, analysts remain convinced that a bid for Sedgwick, which owns the UK's largest financial advice practice, is in the offing in the context of widespread consolidation in the insurance broking sector. The Sedgwick Group is now being linked with Aon's cash-rich US rival, Marsh & McLennan."

Whitbread to sell 62 pubs

Whitbread, the brewer and pub company, said it would sell 62 leased pubs to Avebury Taverns for an undisclosed sum. The sale of the pubs, which are in the North of England, follows Whitbread's sale, in September, of 94 pubs in the South of England to Enterprise Inns Plc for £9.4m. "The sale is part of a review of our estate which we undertake from time to time in a rapidly changing market place," said Ray Parker, property director of Whitbread's leased pub division.

ACCA warning over wages

Companies across the UK are completely unprepared for the introduction of a national minimum wage, according to a survey by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). Many thought the minimum wage could lead to increased inflation, greater unemployment and damage competitiveness.

Newmail bids for Wellman

Newmail, a company set up by venture capital business Alchemy, is offering 50p per share in an agreed bid for Wellman, the maker of industrial furnaces and ovens. Newmail said the offer valued Wellman at around £73m. Wellman said it considered the offer "the best option for shareholders". It said the offer represents a premium of 77 per cent to the closing price of Wellman share of 28.25p on 31 October.

BICC unit wins £100m deals

BICC Group, the cables and electrical equipment group, has confirmed that its unit BICC Communications has won two partnering contracts, together worth around £100m over the next three years. BICC said its unit has agreed to supply optical and metallic cable services for telecommunications and cable television networks on an exclusive basis for three years. The company also said the unit also won a contract to supply ESAT Telecom of Ireland.

Psion signs deal with Dell to supply modem cards

Psion, the hand-held computer company, has signed an agreement to supply US giant Dell Computer with the next generation of hi-tech computer modem cards world-wide.

Responding to questions about trading ahead of the crucial Christmas period, the company said that sales of its new range of Series 5 hand-held computers were "very strong".

Psion Dacom, a wholly owned subsidiary of Psion, will supply Dell, the world's largest direct seller of personal computers, with 56K, high-speed PC cards. Psion believes the deal will add between £15m and £20m to Dacom's revenues, which themselves are around a fifth of the group's total sales.

However, it admitted that with price competition on PC cards "cut-throat", particularly in the direct sales market,

margins on the agreement are unlikely to be very large. However, the deal will boost Psion's presence in the US, where it has struggled to establish itself and where Dell is establishing a growing presence. The two companies already have supply agreements in Europe. Psion's shares rose 17.5p to 451p.

Psion says its 56K cards, which are the size of a credit card and replace desktop modems, are the fastest modems that can be used on normal telephone lines. The cards are reprogrammable and can be upgraded to use with digital GSM mobile-phone systems and ISDN lines.

In contrast to several retailers like Comet, which have found pre-Christmas sales sluggish, Psion said it was confident about sales of the Series 5.

- Sameena Ahmad

Westminster trust plan may spark boom in sector

Westminster Healthcare's decision to set up a property investment trust could be the start of a boom in sale and leaseback in the UK nursing home sector. Sameena Ahmad looks at nursing home tiddler Tamaris, a rare champion of sale and leaseback deals in Britain who's example persuaded Westminster to make its move.

shareholders sweet enough to support their huge cash needs. But when local governments controlled the coffers, funding for care home beds dried up and so did both the operator's profits and the City's goodwill. Tamaris was different, growing profitably and fast.

Back in 1994 it had 234 care home beds. By 1996 that had grown to 906 beds. In March this year the number had more than doubled to 2,000. The deal announced yesterday - where Tamaris is buying 12 Westminster homes and leasing five back through Atlantic Healthcare, Westminster's joint venture investment company, has helped to more than double Tamaris' size again.

Barbara-Ann Maxwell, Tamaris' chief executive, explains the advantages of S&L. "We don't see ourselves as property specialists. We are operators, that's our strength." She points out that with interest rates rising and nursing home companies now forced to depreciate assets, the terms of S&L are easily as good as borrowing from banks. "Not only do we believe we get as good a deal as we could get from the banks, but we have control over our costs," she explained.

"That is important in this business. There is a finite potential operating profit per home and so cost control becomes vital."

That Westminster Health Care, the UK's second biggest nursing home group, capitalised at more than £250m turned to Tamaris, a tiddler valued at £15m, to kick-start its newly created property investment trust says a lot about the potential of sale and leaseback (S&L) financing in the UK.

Compared to the US, where almost every nursing home company is funded through S&L, Tamaris is the only UK company to have extensively used the arrangement to finance growth.

The majority of nursing home groups here have chosen to own and manage their own homes. That was fine when nursing home companies, funded by central government, were growing profits and could keep

COMPANY RESULTS	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Aromascan (Q)	0.49m (1.35m)	-1.07m (1.007m)	-3.97p (-4.06p)	-
Avonvalley (Q)	17.57m (8.88m)	-0.90m (-2.98m)	-2.6p (-2.98p)	-
Barnesdale (Q)	91.31m (85.47m)	6.00m (8.061m)	4.65p (5.81p)	2.05p (2.05p)
Cambridge Antibody (Q)	1.1m (2.1m)	-8.4m (-3.3m)	-41.3p (-32.3p)	-
Channel Holdings (Q)	30.13m (29.2m)	1.77m (1.28m)	1.3p (1.0p)	0.55p (0.55p)
Finchale Farm (Q)	21.8m (18.8m)	0.935m (0.723m)	7.3p (7.1p)	2.75p
Groundwork (Q)	13.25m (6.17m)	-1.29m (0.824m)	-1.29p (-1.55p)	nil
Hambleton (Q)	14.30m (15.23m)	0.933m (0.953m)	8.8p (8.6p)	2.25p (2.25p)
Harley & Hanson (Q)	35.72m (34.49m)	8.48m (8.27m)	23.07p (21.97p)	11.4p (10.6p)
MFI Furniture (Q)	475.5m (440.5m)	35.4m (32.7m)	4.24p (3.85p)	1.8p (1.7p)
ML Laboratories (Q)	6.5m (10.4m)	1.1m (5.5m)	0.5p (2.8p)	-
Pharmalink (Q)	1.85m (2.15m)	-1.74m (-3.15m)	-3.8p (-6.7p)	-
Plym (Q)	71.1m (67.1m)	3.9m (3.65m)	5.6p (4.9p)	2.2p (2.0p)
Stockbourne (Q)	0.800m (1.25m)	-0.07m (-0.45m)	-0.07p (-0.45p)	nil

(Q) - Final (Q) - Interim * comparative figures pre-tax

THE INDEPENDENT

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OUTLOOK

A new hole for Geoffrey Robinson

If there was a motto pinned above Geoffrey Robinson's desk it would read "When in a hole, stop digging" since the more the Paymaster General tries to explain away his offshore trusts the deeper into the mire he seems to get. Yesterday, however, he put his personal travails to one side to help excavate his Government from a different sort of hole. This particular one is black and has been created by someone else who knows a lot about digging, Richard Budge of RJB Mining.

The idea that the Paymaster General can reverse the long-term decline of the coal industry by inviting Mr Budge into his office along with the chief executives of the three big generators and banging a few heads belongs in fantasy land.

But it is what passes these days for Labour's energy policy. Until the Department of Trade and Industry decides what to do with all those applications for gas-fired stations, the bulge in the pipeline will get bigger and we will have policy on the hoof.

From a very New Labour attitude of benign neglect a matter of weeks ago the Government now believes it has an historic role to play as defender of the coal industry and saviour of miners' jobs, certainly at least this side of Christmas.

Quite why a member of the Treasury team has been selected for this task when the Government already has an energy minister and keeps insisting there is no question of throwing money at the pits is a minor mystery. But it probably has something to do with Mr Robinson's "can

do" image as a businessman first and a politician second.

This is hardly the first time New Labour has displayed its quaint but naive faith in the ways of the business world. It has already been beguiled on several occasions. Need to lend some respectability to the welfare to work programme? Then get the man from the Pru to call. Need to bring some intellectual rigour to the tax and benefit review? Then bring on Martin "two brains" Taylor from Barclays Bank.

As Mr Robinson has demonstrated, however, businessmen are mere mortals too. The offshore trusts affair is certainly an embarrassment but thus far it is hard to pin much more on the Paymaster General than a charge of hypocrisy. Squirrelling millions away from the taxpayer while penalising those whose savings exceed £50,000 is poor politics. There again, propping up the pits while denying launch aid for Airbus (another Robinson decision) looks like poor business.

The lesson is that businessmen and politicians do not always mix, even for those invited into Labour's gilded inner circle. It will take a few more embarrassing episodes to drive home the message. Mr Taylor could provide the next one if he decides to buy NatWest and take several thousand bank workers out of the tax system and on to unemployment benefits.

At last, a useful corrective to the fashion for predicting that Asia's financial meltdown spells doom for the rest of the world.

It spells, if not doom then possibly recession for Asia, say the cool heads at the OECD. For the rest, the crisis comes as a rather useful counterweight to the danger of overheating. Certainly, the sharp slowdown in South-east Asia will slow exports from the rest of the world and worsen the European and US trade position. But there need be next to no impact on growth and inflation as long as central banks adjust interest rates appropriately.

Does this rather contrarian view in the semi-annual Economic Outlook make sense? On the evidence so far, yes. The Federal Reserve has already held off raising US interest rates when many analysts expected an increase, and it is likely to leave rates unchanged when it meets again today. As indicator after indicator of domestic inflationary pressure starts to flash red, this can only be a reaction to the potential spillover from Asia.

There is also a growing sentiment that the Bank of England will not increase UK rates any further – a view shared by the OECD, which sees Britain coming in for a soft landing. The Bank's Monetary Policy Committee appears to be waiting for firmer evidence on the export front, which is where the first symptoms of "Asian flu" afflicting the British economy would manifest themselves.

The view that collateral damage on the rest of the world would be limited got several further boost yesterday from within Asia. Korea said it would allow its currency to float, which traders said

would get the pain of devaluation over quickly and allow the won to stabilise, rather than dragging out the decline over several more weeks or months. A package of tax-cuts started to take shape in Japan, with details due today. Even Mahathir Mohamad, the motormouth Malaysian Prime Minister, admitted that the Asian countries had made some economic policy mistakes.

He, and other Asean leaders, still criticised the West for not doing enough to help sort out the crisis. No thanks there for the near-\$100bn emergency credit arranged for South-east Asia in the space of five months. But the assorted grumblers ought to be even more grateful that the Fed and other central banks are not maniacs for financial orthodoxy at all costs, as they are so often portrayed.

This is not to say that there is no danger of the financial meltdown worsening, getting beyond the control of the central bank firefighters. Of course catastrophe is possible. It is just not the most probable outlook.

Meanwhile a bit of evidence at last that it is not all doom and gloom in the Far East. Acer's decision to press ahead with its computer plant in South Wales demonstrates that the Taiwanese economy, at least, is not suffering from quite the same Asian flu that has infected the rest of the region.

Unfortunately, the battle to bring

Acer to these shores has brought on a nasty outbreak of that well-documented British disease otherwise known as inward investmentitis. In its most virulent form, competing regions of the country outbid one another for foreign manufacturing projects so extravagantly that it leaves the taxpayer nursing a very painful hole in his wallet.

The illness is said to be endemic in the valleys, nor does it appear to discriminate between political parties. William Hague contracted a Korean dose of it when he was running the show and persuaded Lucky Goldstar to set up in the principality.

Now Ron Davies, Labour's Welsh Secretary, seems to have contracted a strain from Taipei, if his envious competitors in the North East are to be believed.

We have not been told how much the Welsh Development Agency is paying to get Acer and its jobs into Cardiff but we do know that it is building the factory and the access roads for them and providing some training money.

Outbreaks of this sort were supposed to have been a thing of the past now that the Prime Minister has given Margaret Beckett the overall responsibility for vetting and co-ordinating bids for inward investment projects.

However, having got the antidote she seems to have gone all squeamish about inserting the needle. Come on nurse. Temperatures are getting dangerously high here.

IMF under fire from Asean leaders as S Korea floats won

South Korea bowed to intense IMF pressure yesterday and announced it would let its currency float on the open market from today. Richard Lloyd Parry reports from Seoul on the financial fire-fighting ahead of Thursday's elections, while Stephen Vines reports on the meeting at which Far Eastern heads of state criticised the IMF's response to the region's crisis.

The news that Korea would give up its struggle to limit movements in the won, and allow the currency to float against the dollar, came after the intervention by the Bank of Korea that boosted the exchange rate by its maximum daily amount of 10 per cent. It closed at 1,563.9 won to the dollar, while the key share price index climbed to 385.80.

A Bank of Korea official said: "The decision was made at the request of the IMF. At first we tried to resist, but the IMF request was so strong."

The move was welcomed by the financial markets, with analysts predicting that the prospect of billions of dollars in emergency credit arranged by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) could now restore confidence in the country's shattered markets. The benchmark stock index soared 7.22 per cent – its highest one-day

percentage rise – paring its loss for the year to 41 per cent.

But leaders of the Association of South-east Asian Nations (Asean), meeting in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur, criticised the industrialised nations for not providing enough assistance. The official communiqué cast doubt on the effectiveness of the international rescue packages.

The nosedive in Asia's stocks and currencies eased a little yesterday, although confidence remained fragile in a week of political uncertainty throughout the region.

In South Korea, where a new president will be elected in two days' time, the central bank is reported to have sold some \$200m to prop up the won on Friday. The election will be held on the same day that a \$3.6bn installment of IMF credit is due to be delivered, on top of \$5.6bn which has already been handed over.

The Bank of Korea had to step in after two leading presidential candidates said last week that they would renegotiate the terms of the IMF plan if elected. Over the weekend, however, a joint statement from the outgoing president, Kim Young Sam, and all three front runners pledged that the package would be put into action as agreed.

In Tokyo share prices were little changed yesterday, although the yen weakened after a deeply gloomy business survey. Much attention will be focused today on a tax-cutting plan due to be announced by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, but few expect the measures to be radical.

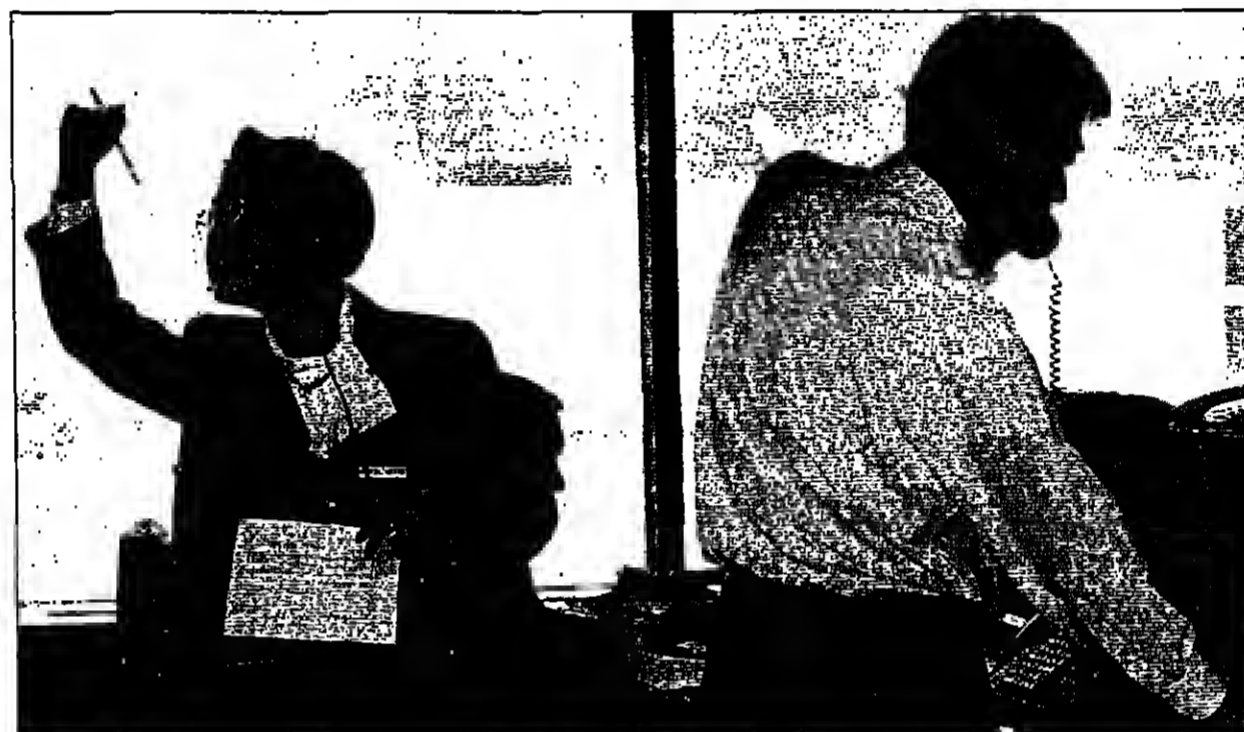
The Bank of Japan admitted its next survey is likely to show even worse business morale. The yen weakened to ¥131.60 to the dollar, the lowest for more than five and a half years.

At the Asean leaders' meeting, Mahathir Mohamad, the Malaysian Prime Minister, yesterday admitted that South-east Asian countries themselves were at fault for building up a high degree of indebtedness. However, he returned to his familiar combative style in criticising the IMF for the high price it was extracting for its rescue packages for Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, as well as South Korea.

"I would think the IMF is looking purely at the macro-economic picture and not seeing the impact of measures required of client states," said Mr Mahathir. He predicted that "lots of companies, including very good companies, will probably fold up".

The Malaysian leader's comments were reflected in the meeting's communiqué, which noted that the IMF rescue had not restored confidence. It described the region's crisis as part of a global problem and said that Europe, Japan and the United States should be doing more to assist.

The leaders in Kuala Lumpur were torn between an anxiety not to provoke further market turmoil while wanting to emphasise the gravity of the crisis. As they met, the Indonesian and Thai currencies plunged to new lows while the Malaysian and Philippine currencies also declined.



South Korean dealers during trading of US dollars at the Korea Exchange Bank in Seoul yesterday. During the morning session, the dollar fell to 1,675 won from 1,710 won of last Friday's session. Photograph: Ahn Young-joon/AP

OECD makes upbeat forecast for West

Prospects for the western economies have improved in the past six months despite the Asian crisis, according to a new forecast from the OECD. But its optimism depends on member countries getting their policies right. Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, weighs up the risks.

An "exceptional" performance by the American economy and a firmer recovery in Europe explain the more upbeat outlook in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's semi-annual economic forecast. It has revised up its predictions for growth in the world's 29 leading economies, saying they will expand by almost 3 per

cent in 1998, just a shade lower than this year.

The influential forecast pencils in a soft landing for the UK, with growth slowing to a sustainable pace and inflation close to its target. It foresees no further rise in interest rates but warns that unemployment will start to rise next year.

The OECD also cautions that a minimum wage at too high a level would "jeopardise the employability of the low-skilled". In a submission to the commission on the minimum wage it has recommended a lower rate or an exemption for young workers.

Its prediction that the Asian crisis is set to have a relatively subdued impact on the rest of the world is likely to prove controversial. Although the report says the turmoil could potentially cut OECD growth by as much as 1 per cent over the next two years, it says member coun-

tries will use interest rate policy to offset the Asian spillover.

"Central banks can see it coming, and they should be able to absorb a lot of the effect by lower interest rates," said Paul Atkinson, head of economic assessment for the OECD. The worst of the crisis would therefore be confined to Asia itself, with the forecasts for Japan and Korea slashed.

However, some economists believe there is a risk recession in Asia will have a serious impact on the US and Europe. Gerard Lyons at DKB International, said: "It is right to take a cautious view about prospects for the rest of the world."

The OECD concedes that the outlook does depend on its Asian members, Japan and Korea, carrying out the appropriate policies too. It recommends tax cuts in Japan but worries that government policy measures

"appear to be approaching their feasible limits."

For Korea, the document predicts a sharp slowdown from this year's likely growth rate of 6.2 per cent. The forecast for the OECD area as a whole in 1998 is that GDP will expand by 2.9 per cent, compared with the 2.7 per cent growth rate pencilled in earlier this year. There are almost no signs of inflationary pressure.

Britain's GDP is likely to expand by 2.2 per cent, a downgrade from 2.7 per cent. The successive interest rate increases since 1 May get the credit for cooling the economy to a steadier pace. In the money markets, sterling fell below 2.90 against the German mark, a 1 per cent fall on the day.

However, the report warns that the unemployment rate is unlikely to fall much further despite the Government's welfare-to-work programme.

Three Arrows ponders stock market flotation

Three Arrows, the company that helps drivers with repairs and insurance claims if they have an accident that is not their fault, is considering a stock market flotation.

The Manchester-based group has appointed NatWest Markets, the investment bank, to look at the options for the business though Chris Norman, Three Arrows' founder and owner, says he has yet to make a firm decision.

Three Arrows specialises in credit hire and repair. After an accident, the company directs the unfortunate driver to a garage, provides them with a hire car while their vehicle is being repaired and then chases up the claim with the offending driver's insurance company.

A float has been made more likely by the success of Helphire, a similar business that floated in March.

Since coming to the market at 100p Helphire's share price has soared, hitting a new high of 292p last week.

Mr Norman said that until now the company's growth had been funded from its own resources.

"We have very little bank borrowings," he said.

But he pointed out that raising funds on the stock market would be necessary if the company decided to increase its rate of growth and expand the credit repair side of the business.

The latter is particularly cash-hungry because the company tends to pay garages for repairs promptly, while it frequently has to wait several months for insurance companies to cough up.

However, increased competition means credit hire and repair companies have no option but to offer the service to garages in order to get them sign up.

"You have to offer it, it's the only way you'll get the business," Mr Norman said.

Helphire, which is forecast to make a pretax profit of £2.5m in the year to March 1998, has a market value of £47.6m.

But Three Arrows is larger and would be able to command a better price tag. In the year to August 1997 the company made pretax profits of £6m on turnover of £20m.

— Peter Thal Larsen

Nationwide heightens mortgage rivalry

Nationwide yesterday announced it would keep its mortgage rates substantially lower than its quoted rivals indefinitely – unless interest rates rose again. Andrew Verity reports on the latest volley in the war between the mutuals and their rivals.

The UK's largest building society claimed the "mutuality gap" allowed it to go on offering rates at least 60 basis points lower than its rivals such as the Halifax, which were obliged to pay dividends to shareholders.

The announcement defied expectations that Nationwide would be forced by the rising

cost of lending to raise its rates in January, when it will increase the rate of interest it pays on savings accounts.

Nationwide is selling new variable rate mortgages at 8.1 per cent, while the Halifax charges 8.7 per cent. The building society is at the same time competing with supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsbury by offering an instant access postal account which pays interest of 6.7 per cent.

The margin between the best savings rates and borrowing rates, from which the building society extracts most of its profit, is now less than 1.5 points, leading quoted lenders to question whether Nationwide's position is sustainable.

In contrast, Halifax offers interest of just 3.45 per cent on its instant access account, leaving it with a margin of more

than 4.5 per cent between saving and lending rates.

Brian Davis, Nationwide's chief executive, said: "After a tremendously successful 1997, we are continuing to build on the natural advantage we hold as a building society."

He added: "Over the typical life of a mortgage, 7 years, and based on rates available from 1 January, a Nationwide borrower would be £1,911 better off. We aim to make 1998 a happy new year for all our customers."

However, Nationwide was careful to stress that the promise would not hold if the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee decides again to raise base rates.

The move follows an announcement last week by Bradford & Bingley, another mutual building society, that it would

raise interest rates for savers by up to 0.45 percentage points. It is now offering 6.8 per cent on its instant access postal account and is pledged not to boost its variable rate of 7.95 per cent before 1 February.

However, Bradford & Bingley's subsidiary, Mortgage Express, has been unable to demonstrate the benefits of mutuality. Rather than trading on the gap between savings and borrowings, the wholly-owned company has itself to pay market rates when it borrows capital on the money markets.

A spokesman for the Halifax said standard variable rates were less relevant now that the vast majority of new mortgages were fixed-rate loans. But he conceded that the bulk of existing borrowers, who have variable rate mortgages, would be affected.

Savings industry criticises latest appointment to the FSA

Howard Davies, the chairman of the Financial Services Authority (FSA), has appointed the man behind the decision to launch the mammoth review of mis-sold pensions to be one of the main advisers to the super-regulator's new board. The decision is likely to aggravate a savings industry already smarting about the board's lack of industry representatives.

Michael Blair, the key policy former who led the decision to launch the pension mis-selling review in 1994, was yesterday appointed as the top adviser to the board of directors of the FSA.

The decision to appoint Mr Blair, currently deputy chief executive of the Securities and Investment Board (SIB), drew immediate criticism from a sav-

ings industry which privately believes the mis-selling review was the product of a great miscalculation by the regulators.

Industry practitioners said that while Mr Blair was respected as a regulator, his appointment would further alienate practitioners from a new regulator which now had very little top-level input from the industry.

Geoffrey Pointon, a former board member of financial advice regulator Fimbra, said: "Mr Davies has got a major challenge on his hands to show that he is in touch with the industry. Many feel that the review has blighted the industry for too long and now, with politicians getting involved, it is going to continue."

While leading industry figures have accepted the pension review as a necessary evil, many believe that SIB, the FSA's predecessor, failed to calculate the effort required to complete it.

The deadline for completing the review of 90 per cent of the most urgent cases of mis-selling was set in 1994 for 1 January 1996. But during 1995 and 1996 the review became mired in legal disputes and even the most urgent phase is more than two years behind schedule.

— Andrew Verity

Siemens talk puts Motion Media in the spotlight



CATHY NEWMAN

MARKET REPORT

Motion Media, the Oxf-listed minnow which sells video phones, has been getting in the picture. The company has been climbing for a few days now, and was up another 10p to 190p yesterday.

Dealers are gambling on a large overseas order for the video-phones, which cost £1,000 each. Industry pundits say Siemens may be about to place an order with Motion worth up to £100m. The German electronics behemoth has pledged to supply 100,000 phones to Deutsche Telekom, and may turn to Motion to fulfil the demand.

Motion is also thought to be talking to BT and Alcatel about its products, which also include television set-top boxes. It is expected to have sold its thousandth video-phone by Christmas.

Elsewhere, Shell might

have adopted the advertising slogan of a certain blue-chip telecoms company, proving beyond all reasonable doubt that it's good to talk.

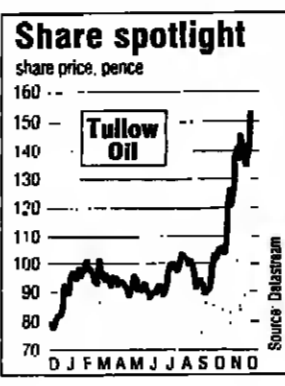
The oil company saw its share-price zoom 20.5p to end the session at 448.5p after a round of briefings with investors on Friday. Since then, brokers' buy notes have been raining down on Shell like confetti. NatWest is "very positive" on the company, and has included it in its top 15 for 1998. Hoare Govett, Kleinwort Benson and SBC Warburg all joined the Shell appreciation society, after being impressed by the company's plans for the next five years. Shell has pledged to make a 13 per cent return on capital next year, and has also hinted that a share buy-back might be a possibility if Dutch law is changed. Investors also wel-

comed a commitment to greater transparency, which will see the company reporting its results in dollars.

More than 20 million shares changed hands, making it the most heavily traded Footsie stock. Cairn Energy firmed 1.5p in sympathy to 510p. Shell and Cairn announced last month that they were hoping to invest up to \$5bn in exploration and development in Bangladesh.

Another to evade a certain oily charm yesterday was Tullow Oil. The group, which started the year well below the 100p mark, ended up 6.75p at 153.5p, with dealers saving a bid was on the cards. Enterprise Oil also notched up 2p to 58p.

Dealers appeared to be suffering from Christmas party hangovers during the morning, with Footsie struggling to gain



High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	YTD	P/E	Code
220	215	Alcochem	215.00	+0.50	0.1	000	000
210	205	Alcochem	205.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
205	200	Alcochem	200.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
200	195	Alcochem	195.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
195	190	Alcochem	190.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
190	185	Alcochem	185.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
185	180	Alcochem	180.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
180	175	Alcochem	175.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
175	170	Alcochem	170.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
170	165	Alcochem	165.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
165	160	Alcochem	160.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
160	155	Alcochem	155.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
155	150	Alcochem	150.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
150	145	Alcochem	145.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
145	140	Alcochem	140.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
140	135	Alcochem	135.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
135	130	Alcochem	130.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
130	125	Alcochem	125.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
125	120	Alcochem	120.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
120	115	Alcochem	115.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
115	110	Alcochem	110.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
110	105	Alcochem	105.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
105	100	Alcochem	100.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
100	95	Alcochem	95.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
95	90	Alcochem	90.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
90	85	Alcochem	85.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
85	80	Alcochem	80.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
80	75	Alcochem	75.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
75	70	Alcochem	70.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
70	65	Alcochem	65.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
65	60	Alcochem	60.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
60	55	Alcochem	55.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
55	50	Alcochem	50.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
50	45	Alcochem	45.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
45	40	Alcochem	40.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
40	35	Alcochem	35.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
35	30	Alcochem	30.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
30	25	Alcochem	25.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
25	20	Alcochem	20.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
20	15	Alcochem	15.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
15	10	Alcochem	10.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
10	5	Alcochem	5.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
5	0	Alcochem	0.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	YTD	P/E	Code
220	215	Alcochem	215.00	+0.50	0.1	000	000
210	205	Alcochem	205.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
205	200	Alcochem	200.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
200	195	Alcochem	195.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
195	190	Alcochem	190.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
190	185	Alcochem	185.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
185	180	Alcochem	180.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
180	175	Alcochem	175.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
175	170	Alcochem	170.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
170	165	Alcochem	165.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
165	160	Alcochem	160.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
160	155	Alcochem	155.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
155	150	Alcochem	150.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
150	145	Alcochem	145.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
145	140	Alcochem	140.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
140	135	Alcochem	135.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
135	130	Alcochem	130.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
130	125	Alcochem	125.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
125	120	Alcochem	120.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
120	115	Alcochem	115.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
115	110	Alcochem	110.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
110	105	Alcochem	105.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
105	100	Alcochem	100.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
100	95	Alcochem	95.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
95	90	Alcochem	90.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
90	85	Alcochem	85.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
85	80	Alcochem	80.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
80	75	Alcochem	75.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
75	70	Alcochem	70.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
70	65	Alcochem	65.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
65	60	Alcochem	60.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
60	55	Alcochem	55.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
55	50	Alcochem	50.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
50	45	Alcochem	45.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
45	40	Alcochem	40.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
40	35	Alcochem	35.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
35	30	Alcochem	30.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
30	25	Alcochem	25.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
25	20	Alcochem	20.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
20	15	Alcochem	15.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
15	10	Alcochem	10.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
10	5	Alcochem	5.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
5	0	Alcochem	0.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	YTD	P/E	Code
220	215	Alcochem	215.00	+0.50	0.1	000	000
210	205	Alcochem	205.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
205	200	Alcochem	200.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
200	195	Alcochem	195.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
195	190	Alcochem	190.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
190	185	Alcochem	185.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
185	180	Alcochem	180.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
180	175	Alcochem	175.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
175	170	Alcochem	170.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
170	165	Alcochem	165.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
165	160	Alcochem	160.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
160	155	Alcochem	155.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
155	150	Alcochem	150.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
150	145	Alcochem	145.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
145	140	Alcochem	140.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
140	135	Alcochem	135.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
135	130	Alcochem	130.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
130	125	Alcochem	125.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
125	120	Alcochem	120.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
120	115	Alcochem	115.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
115	110	Alcochem	110.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
110	105	Alcochem	105.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
105	100	Alcochem	100.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
100	95	Alcochem	95.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
95	90	Alcochem	90.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
90	85	Alcochem	85.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
85	80	Alcochem	80.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
80	75	Alcochem	75.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
75	70	Alcochem	70.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
70	65	Alcochem	65.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
65	60	Alcochem	60.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
60	55	Alcochem	55.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
55	50	Alcochem	50.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
50	45	Alcochem	45.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
45	40	Alcochem	40.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
40	35	Alcochem	35.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
35	30	Alcochem	30.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
30	25	Alcochem	25.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
25	20	Alcochem	20.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
20	15	Alcochem	15.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
15	10	Alcochem	10.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
10	5	Alcochem	5.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000
5	0	Alcochem	0.00	-0.50	0.1	000	000

Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Wheaton	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
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Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
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Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
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Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
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Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
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Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
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Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
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Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
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Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
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Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
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Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser	48.00	+0.00	0.3	0.1	000	000	000
Weyerhaeuser							

Cowboys' era ends as Jets buck trend

The mokie Leon Johnson returned a second-half kick-off 101 yards for a TD for the Jets, who had lost their previous two games. Bill Parcells' team



The Cowboys, who had won the last five NFC East titles, rallied for two touchdowns in the fourth quarter to make things interesting, before losing their fourth game in a row. That is Dallas's longest barren spell since losing their last seven games in 1989.

Jim Harbaugh threw a career-high four TD passes, including three to tight end

The outcome extinguished

The Baltimore Ravens beat the Tennessee Oilers 21-19 in the last game to be played at 43-year-old Memorial Stadium while Chicago beat St Louis 13-10 in a basement battle.

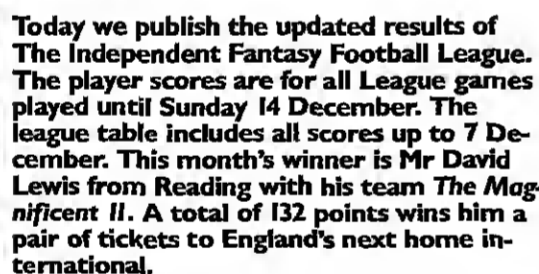
Cup captaincy can wait says Montgomerie

Having just won his fifth successive European Order of Merit at the age of 34, he maintains he has finally come to

Montgomery, who won the European Order of Merit for the fifth successive time this year, has the chance of lifting first \$1m (£620,000) prize of 1998 when he faces the South African Ernie Els in the semi-finals of the Andersen Consulting Challenge in Phoenix on 3 January.

— Frank Malley

RECAYON



Every time one of your players score you get four points. There are four points for a keeper or a defender every time their team keeps a clean sheet. If a player scores the winning goal, i.e. if there is a one goal difference in the scoreline, the player scoring the final goal for the winning team is awarded 1 bonus point awarded in addition to standard goal related points. Each successful Assist, a pass judged by our experts to lead directly to a goal, will give a player 3 points. The opinion of our experts on the matter is final. Each player selected and starting a game will be awarded one point.

Updated player scores and league tables will be published every Tuesday in *The Independent* and repeated the following Sunday in the *Independent on Sunday*.

HOW TO SCORE

player score **████████████████████** 4
clean sheet **████████████████████** 4
winning goal **██████** 1
successful assist **████████████████████** 3
-1 **██████** yellow card
-3 **████████████████████** red card
manager's team wins **████████████████████** 3
draw **██████** 1

INDEPENDENT FANTASY FOOTBALL

LEAGUE TABLE

POS	NAME	TEAM	POINTS
1	Miss Lisa Wild	Amerretco AFC	631
2	Mr Archer	No Wright	623
3	Mr B Sari	The Untouchables	617
3	Mr D Aston	Billy Boy's 2nd II	617
3	Mr J McCrossan	Washed Up Army	617
6	Mr C King	Seeking Vicory	613
6	Mr P Turffe	Pins 4 Ups	613
6	Mr D Evans	Boothon Boys End Old Boys	613
6	Mr J Cox	Southville FC	613
10	Mr B Sari	Simply The Best	612
11	Mr I Boyle	Wembley Bunderers	610
11	Mr A Wingrove	Tron's Brace	610
11	Mr T Lyons	Diana's Demons	610
14	Mr D Baker	Deja Vu	608
15	Mr S Scott	Unbeatable	605
15	Mr Brady	Look Lively	605
17	Mr M Pawley	Robert's Rovers	604
17	Mr C Thomas	Scumdrope Extras	604
19	Mr K Boyle	Clogston Rovers	599
20	Mr S Scott	The Dream Team	598
21	Mr I Brown	Ruffus	596
21	Mr A Choudi	Nickies 9th II	596
21	Mr T Russ	Sammy's Soccer Scorchers	596
21	Mr J Salt	One Watt City	596
26	Mr J McCrossan	Washed Up Army	595
25	Mr D Edmington	Edmo United	595
27	Mr Killierby	The Killer Bees	594
27	Mr F Henderson	Secondary Celtic	594
29	Mr D Baker	Dead Beat	593
29	Mr G Bell	Stunning Stunts	593
29	Mr T Brazier	Wow For Short	593
32	Mr C Milin	Grimsbys Fish	590
32	Mr J Cox	Retro Rovers	590
34	Mr P Green	Powis Rangers	589
34	Mr D Arcrocyd	Jack's Lads	589
38	Mr M Ward	Team A 40	588
36	Mr M Rickard	Aller Lumberg	588
36	Mr R Sheridan	The Frank Large Fan Club	588
39	Mr G Ford	Linhorte Rovers	587
39	Mr S Coulton	-	587
39	Mr T Robson	PJ United	587
42	Mr S Man	Rebecca's Rovers	586

GOALKEEPERS

300	Lukas	ARS	1	45	49	357	Frankfurt	CRV	1
301	Sabat	ARS	0	10	10	358	Frankfurt	CRV	1
302	Manusker	ARS	0	10	10	359	Berresna	WOL	1
303	Witsch	ARS	0	32	40	360	Duberry	CHE	1
304	Chap	ARS	0	15	15	361	Chap	CHE	1
305	Bonisch	ARS	0	5	15	362	Lamwunde	CHE	1
306	Chap	ARS	0	15	15	363	Chap	CHE	1
307	Leone	BAR	2	11	11	364	Simila	CRV	1
308	Flowers	BAR	2	11	11	365	Simila	CRV	1
309	Lane	BLA	0	12	15	366	Daish	CRV	1
310	Brattigan	BLA	0	45	12	367	Daish	CRV	1
311	De Vries	BLA	0	45	12	368	Burns	CRV	1
312	Grolos	CHE	0	10	10	369	Burns	CRV	1
313	Grolos	CHE	0	10	10	370	Lewisch	CRV	1
314	Offshore	COA	0	37	11	371	Lewisch	CRV	1
315	Hartman	COA	0	37	11	372	Goudin	CRV	1
316	Hartman	COA	0	37	11	373	Hartman	CRV	1
317	Hartman	COA	0	37	11	374	Hartman	CRV	1
318	Neh	CRY	0	10	10	375	Wheat	CRV	1
319	Neh	CRY	0	10	10	376	Wheat	CRV	1
320	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	377	Loughan	CRV	1
321	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	378	Loughan	CRV	1
322	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	379	Hartman	CRV	1
323	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	380	Hartman	CRV	1
324	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	381	Hartman	CRV	1
325	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	382	Hartman	CRV	1
326	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	383	Hartman	CRV	1
327	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	384	Hartman	CRV	1
328	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	385	Hartman	CRV	1
329	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	386	Hartman	CRV	1
330	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	387	Hartman	CRV	1
331	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	388	Hartman	CRV	1
332	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	389	Hartman	CRV	1
333	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	390	Hartman	CRV	1
334	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	391	Hartman	CRV	1
335	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	392	Hartman	CRV	1
336	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	393	Hartman	CRV	1
337	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	394	Hartman	CRV	1
338	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	395	Hartman	CRV	1
339	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	396	Hartman	CRV	1
340	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	397	Hartman	CRV	1
341	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	398	Hartman	CRV	1
342	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	399	Hartman	CRV	1
343	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	400	Hartman	CRV	1
344	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	401	Hartman	CRV	1
345	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	402	Hartman	CRV	1
346	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	403	Hartman	CRV	1
347	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	404	Hartman	CRV	1
348	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	405	Hartman	CRV	1
349	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	406	Hartman	CRV	1
350	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	407	Hartman	CRV	1
351	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	408	Hartman	CRV	1
352	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	409	Hartman	CRV	1
353	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	410	Hartman	CRV	1
354	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	411	Hartman	CRV	1
355	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	412	Hartman	CRV	1
356	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	413	Hartman	CRV	1
357	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	414	Hartman	CRV	1
358	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	415	Hartman	CRV	1
359	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	416	Hartman	CRV	1
360	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	417	Hartman	CRV	1
361	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	418	Hartman	CRV	1
362	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	419	Hartman	CRV	1
363	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	420	Hartman	CRV	1
364	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	421	Hartman	CRV	1
365	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	422	Hartman	CRV	1
366	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	423	Hartman	CRV	1
367	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	424	Hartman	CRV	1
368	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	425	Hartman	CRV	1
369	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	426	Hartman	CRV	1
370	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	427	Hartman	CRV	1
371	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	428	Hartman	CRV	1
372	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	429	Hartman	CRV	1
373	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	430	Hartman	CRV	1
374	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	431	Hartman	CRV	1
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377	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	434	Hartman	CRV	1
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379	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	436	Hartman	CRV	1
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389	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	446	Hartman	CRV	1
390	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	447	Hartman	CRV	1
391	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	448	Hartman	CRV	1
392	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	449	Hartman	CRV	1
393	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	450	Hartman	CRV	1
394	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	451	Hartman	CRV	1
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409	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	466	Hartman	CRV	1
410	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	467	Hartman	CRV	1
411	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	468	Hartman	CRV	1
412	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	469	Hartman	CRV	1
413	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	470	Hartman	CRV	1
414	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	471	Hartman	CRV	1
415	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	472	Hartman	CRV	1
416	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	473	Hartman	CRV	1
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425	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	482	Hartman	CRV	1
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443	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	500	Hartman	CRV	1
444	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	501	Hartman	CRV	1
445	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	502	Hartman	CRV	1
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454	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	511	Hartman	CRV	1
455	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	512	Hartman	CRV	1
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467	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	524	Hartman	CRV	1
468	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10	525	Hartman	CRV	1
469	Hartman	CRY	0	10	10				

6	2.5	Sea	Scales	T
12	3.0	Sea	Campbell	T

19	36	Calderwood	TOT	1	21	25	683	Hastings
20	36	Anderson	TOT	1	21	25	683	Harmon
21	36	Beltingh	TOT	1	18	18	683	Taylor
22	36	Carr	TOT	1	36	12	686	Leach
23	36	MacKinn	WH	0	0	0	686	Leach
24	36	Wright	WH	0	0	3.5	688	Cruddy
25	36	Flanagan	WH	0	12	12	687	Wright
26	36	Hall	WH	0	0	3.0	690	Redman
27	36	Potts	WH	0	10	12	693	McKinnam
28	36	Wright	WH	0	23	23	693	Wright
29	36	Impey	WH	5	9	2.5	695	Lowenbrun
30	36	Turner	WH	0	0	27	696	Grogan
31	36	Wright	WH	0	3	3	697	Beckham
32	36	Connamum	WH	5	36	15	698	Keane
33	36	Thatcher	WH	0	25	2.0	698	Benn
34	36	McGee	WH	0	0	0	700	Forski
35	36	Nimble	WH	5	26	15	703	Loe
36	36						704	Itary
37	36						705	Gallie
38	36						706	Skandery
39	36						707	Wright
40	36						708	Hunter
41	36						709	Hyde
42	36						710	Whittington
43	36						713	Cruddy
44	36						714	Wright
45	36						715	Anderson
46	36						716	Stacey
47	36						717	Clark
48	36						718	Wright
49	36						719	Wright
50	36						720	Wright
51	36						721	Wright
52	36						722	Wright
53	36						723	Wright
54	36						724	Wright
55	36						725	Wright
56	36						726	Wright
57	36						727	Wright
58	36						728	Wright
59	36						729	Wright
60	36						730	Wright
61	36						731	Wright
62	36						732	Wright
63	36						733	Wright
64	36						734	Wright
65	36						735	Wright
66	36						736	Wright
67	36						737	Wright
68	36						738	Wright
69	36						739	Wright
70	36						740	Wright
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80	36						750	Wright
81	36						751	Wright
82	36						752	Wright
83	36						753	Wright
84	36						754	Wright
85	36						755	Wright
86	36						756	Wright
87	36						757	Wright
88	36						758	Wright
89	36						759	Wright
90	36						760	Wright

600	Blair	ARS	1	19	2.5	734	Wright
601	Parvise	ARS	0	0	27	735	Hyde
602	Wright	ARS	0	0	2.7	736	Whittington
605	Veira	ARS	0	20	4.5	733	Cruddy
606	Gowans	ARS	0	0	0	734	Wright
607	Memend Rodriguez	ARS	1	1	2.0	735	Anderson
608	Taylor	AV	0	21	19	736	Stacey
609	Wright	AV	0	0	0	737	Clark
610	Draper	AV	0	24	4.1	738	Wright
613	Mercille	BAR	0	0	2.0	739	Wright
614	Buller	BAR	0	0	0	740	Wright
615	Redfean	BAR	10	45	1.5	741	Wright
616	Eaden	BAR	2	13	1.2	742	Nachen
617	Trotter	BAR	0	0	0	743	Wright
618	Wright	BLA	0	0	3.0	744	McHughes
619	Waters	BLA	0	0	0	745	Wright
621	McKunlay	BOL	4	7	3.0	747	Wright
623	Shewford	BOL	5	26	3.3	748	Wright
624	Flintoff	BOL	1	1	1.5	749	Wright
625	Phundant	BOL	4	21	1.5	750	Wright
626	Thompson	BOL	5	26	3.3	751	Wright
627	Pallock	BOL	5	18	1.2	752	Wright
628	Seaton	BOL	5	18	1.2	753	Wright
629	Gulfi	CHI	0	0	4.8	754	Wright
630	De Maiten	CHI	0	24	5.8	755	Wright
631	Wright	CHI	0	0	0	756	Wright
634	Newman	CHI	0	4	2.4	757	Wright
635	Phigues	CHI	0	3	1.0	758	Wright
636	Belvedere	CHI	0	0	0	759	Wright
637	Teller	CHI	0	17	1.8	760	Wright
638	Redgrave	COV	1	15	2.4	801	Wright
639	McKinn	COV	0	17	1.2	802	Wright
641	Saido	COV	0	13	2.4	803	Wright
643	Johnson	COV	0	21	0	804	Wright
644	Simmer	DER	0	1	1.8	805	Wright
645	Aschwie	DER	0	9	1.2	806	Wright
646	D Powell	DER	0	1	1.2	807	Wright
647	Van der Laan	DER	0	1	1.2	808	Wright
648	Daily	DER	0	0	1.6	809	Wright
649	Hunt	DER	0	8	2.0	810	Wright
650	Farbman	DER	0	8	2.0	811	Wright
651	Grant	LVE	0	0	1.8	812	Wright
652	Farnley	EVL	0	1	1.8	813	Wright
653	Stuart	EVL	0	1	1.8	814	Wright
654	Wright	EVL	0	1	1.8	815	Wright
655	Wright	EVL	0	1	1.8	816	Wright
656	Bowyer	LEE	0	26	2.5	817	Wright
657	Wright	LEE	0	26	2.5	818	Wright

801	Wright	819	Wright
802	Wright	820	Wright
803	Wright	821	Wright
804	Wright	822	Wright
805	Wright	823	Wright
806	Wright	824	Wright
807	Wright	825	Wright
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812	Wright	830	Wright
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816	Wright	834	Wright
817	Wright	835	Wright
818	Wright	836	Wright
819	Wright	837	Wright
820	Wright	838	Wright
821	Wright	839	Wright
822	Wright	840	Wright
823	Wright	841	Wright
824	Wright	842	Wright
825	Wright	843	Wright
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872	Wright	890	Wright
873	Wright	891	Wright
874	Wright	892	Wright
875	Wright	893	Wright
876	Wright	894	Wright
877	Wright	895	Wright
878	Wright	896	Wright
879	Wright	897	Wright
880	Wright	898	Wright
881	Wright	899	Wright
882	Wright	900	Wright

EE	0	0	35	845	Whelan
EE	0	35	15	846	Huckerby

[illegible]

	1	2	3
COV	1	2	3.0
CIY	9	34	3.5

COV	0	15	15
CRY	0	21	20
CRY	0	2	10
CRY	0	3	10
CRY	0	31	20
BAR	5	36	25
PER	5	31	25
PER	1	37	30
EVE	2	23	65
EVE	0	14	40
LEE	0	0	30
LEE	0	8	15
LEE	0	30	50
LEE	1	8	35
LIV	1	30	55
LIV	1	36	95
LIV	1	20	40
LIV	0	37	25
MAN	0	31	60
MAN	0	56	62
MAN	0	37	70
MAN	0	53	50
MAN	0	0	20
NEW	0	0	100
NEW	1	17	70
NEW	1	27	50
NEW	0	23	70
NEW	0	0	20
SHEP	0	2	30
SHEP	1	56	35
SOU	1	5	35
SOU	5	28	70
SOU	0	6	8
TOT	1	13	59
TOT	0	67	50
WH	1	6	15
WH	0	15	35
WIM	0	26	40
WIM	1	18	40
WIM	0	7	15

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An Addington reminder from Richards

Gordon Richards is on the Gold Cup trail with Saturday's Haydock winner The Grey Monk. However, as the Greystoke trainer tells Richard Edmondson, he has another live contender for Cheltenham.

If it had not been for the popular vote on May Day you could have been excused for believing this was a grey year. The hue has certainly been hugely advantageous to this National Hunt season.

RACING'S FUTURES MARKET

Bells Life, 10/11 lengths third to Seor El Betrutti in the 2m5f Tripleprint Gold Cup Handicap Chase at Cheltenham on Saturday, is 10-1 with Ladbrokes - William Hill offer just 6-1 - for the Welsh National.

Seor El Betrutti is 20-1 with

Sunny Bay has won a Hennessy, Kelcey a Bula Hurdle on his stomp up the ante-post betting for the Champion Hurdle, and Seor El Betrutti has completed an auspicious double in the Murphy's and Tripleprint Gold Cups. Gordon Richards is fairly grey too, and he has provided two like-minded winners in the shape of One Man and The Grey Monk.

The Grey Monk, Saturday's Tommy Whittle Chase winner at Haydock, has several options for his next encounter. He could run either back at Newton-le-Willows, Cheltenham or to the Hennessy Gold Cup at Leopardstown, where he

chewed the surface last season. The options, however, are limited for the Cheltenham Gold Cup. If he cannot get his teeth into the surface there next March it will be no-go. The nine-year-old still has a greater chance of appearing at Prestbury Park than the trainer's name horse, One Man. Festival spectators will be lucky to see him at all. "The grey horse certainly won't be in the Gold Cup and whether he'll go to Cheltenham at all I don't know," Richards said yesterday. "It's only 50-50 that we'll run him in the Queo Mother (Champion Chase) as there are plenty of other good races for him."

It is Richards's opinion and that of John Hales, the gelding's owner, that One Man does not last the Gold Cup journey. The messages that Richard Dunwoody, his rider, receives are

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Cheeky Charlie (Folkestone 2.30)
NB: Master Mario (Hereford 3.10)

somewhat different. The jockey suggests the horse stops himself in the closing stages as he anticipates grave physical discomfort should he carry on. There may be sense in this, as no matter what the distance, One

Man turns from armour-plated tank to dangling marionette in the closing stages. Dunwoody's opinion is that animals that collapse as drunkly as One Man does are not guilty of failing to stay; but are victims of internal bleeding. "The barrier he hits could be in his mind," the jockey observed in a recent Christmas book collaboration with Marcus Armytage. "I always wonder if at Sandown back in January [1996], when he won his first King George, he went to the extreme. I know he gave his all."

"He was very tired and blew hard. Maybe he went to the limit and just maybe he's not that keen to go there again. He's an

intelligent enough horse to know where the limit is."

There is no limit for Gordon himself however, and even if he cannot swing through the trees at Greystoke any more he is still going strong at 67. "I still love the old horses you know, you never lose that," he said. "As long as my head keeps working I'll be all right. I hear some of these younger boys with their new ideas and I take some on board and I ignore others."

"But I've still got a few ideas of my own and as long as I can find someone to do the brawn while I do the brains then we'll go on. You never know it all. You keep learning."



Richards: still going strong

Gordon, it seems, will never be divorced from racing, and even when he goes he will probably ensure his final resting place lies where horses' hooves are resounding just above him. As it stands, his record does not contain a Gold Cup winner, but he believes that may be corrected in three months' time. The identity of the saviour may surprise some. Addington Boy was withdrawn on the eve of the Gold Cup last season, and has recovered from tendon trouble. He was as low as 8-1 last March when his sick note was accepted. He is a sound jumper, albeit with no bottom-pitching turn of pace, though his record is seven wins, two seconds and a third from 10 completed starts over fences. He has no enemies among his regular backers.

"Let's not forget about Addington," Richards said. "You have to look at him to see he has improved since last year. I'm very, very pleased with him. In view of this assessment, 20-1 looks quite plump with William Hill and the advice is to invest some coppers. I have."

McCaig given four-month ban for biting linesman

Superleague disciplinary chiefs yesterday banned the Newcastle Cobras defender Rob McCaig until 15 April and fined him £1,000 for biting the Cardiff linesman Moray Hanson on his right arm last Thursday.

The incident occurred late in the Express Cup match and he was originally given a suspension of at least five games for roughing and gross misconduct for physical abuse of an official. But the league reviewed video evidence of the incident and decided that McCaig, a Canadian making his fifth appearance for the team, should be punished more severely. The British Ice Hockey Association has supported the judgement, ensuring that McCaig will not be eligible to play in any other British competition this season.

Sheffield Steelers' bruising battle with Nottingham Panthers on Sunday night is to be investigated by the disciplinary committee following a mass brawl which led to seven players being dismissed. Punctures were exchanged following a bench clearance in the third period with Steelers 4-0 down to Nottingham Panthers at the Sheffield Arena. Three home players - Corey Beaulieu, Scott Allison and Mike Ware - were dismissed by the referee Mike Rowe along with Panthers' Jeff Sebastian and Craig Nienhuis.

Rowe dismissed both teams to their dressing-rooms for five minutes to cool off, but when play resumed, the Steelers captain, Rob Wilson, clashed with Derek Laxdal and both players were also ejected. A record 301 Superleague penalty minutes were handed out with Panthers going on to win 5-0. The previous record was 192 minutes.

The Steelers manager, Alex Dampier, said: "Sticks got up around the ice and the next thing I knew, things had started. I felt they left the bench before we did. It's a bad thing to happen when you're losing. We'll get some suspensions out of it and deservedly so."

A Superleague spokesman said: "All the video evidence will be studied, but everything depends on the referee's report. Once everything is collated it will then be sent to Richard Borey [director of sport] and the disciplinary committee."

Brown's saves make it easier for Eastcote

Eastcote, leaders in the ESL South Premier, returned to winning form in their last game before the Christmas break with a 3-2 win at Bournemouth where they owed much to goalkeeper Dan Brown for a string of fine saves, including a penalty stroke with the score at 1-1.

A penalty corner goal from Danny Geach set Eastcote on their way in the 10th minute, but although Nick Lygo-Baker quickly equalised, Jon Curtis put the Middlesex side back in the lead before the interval. The former Cambridge University captain Adrian Carter put them further ahead before Tim Stainer pulled a goal back for Bournemouth to set up a worrying final 10 minutes for Eastcote.

Tim Prior, with a well-timed hat-trick, inspired High Wycombe to a 3-1 win away at Ramsgate and, with Chichester being held to a 3-3 draw at Tunbridge Wells, into second place. City of Portsmouth were in goalkeeping mood against newly promoted Purley with a 7-3 win which took them into third place.

Purley, who swept all before them last season to win promotion, have found the going particularly tough in the Premier where they have been badly handicapped by the retirement of Paddy Osborn, their goalscorer, who has a wrist injury. He joined them last year from Reading after he had been the first to 150 National League goals.

Stuart Avery was again on form for Portsmouth with a hat-trick, while Richard Penrose and Rob Boswell both scored two goals each.

— Bill Colwell

Welsh National Handicap Chase (3m 5f 10yds)				
Horse (Trainer)	Conal	William Hill	Ladbrokes	Total
Cyffwrdd (M Popsford)	7-1	7-1	5-1	5-1
Indira (M Popsford)	7-1	7-1	5-1	5-1
Indira (M Popsford)	7-1	7-1	5-1	5-1
Indira (M Popsford)	7-1	7-1	5-1	5-1
Indira (M Popsford)	7-1	7-1	5-1	5-1
Indira (M Popsford)	7-1	7-1	5-1	5-1
Indira (M Popsford)	7-1	7-1	5-1	5-1
Indira (M Popsford)	7-1	7-1	5-1	5-1
Indira (M Popsford)	7-1	7-1	5-1	5-1
Indira (M Popsford)	7-1	7-1	5-1	5-1

Each-way a quarter the odds, places, 1, 2, 3, 4 (Cheltenham, Saturday, 27 December)

1998 Triumph Hurdle (2m 1f)				
Horse (Trainer)	Conal	William Hill	Ladbrokes	Total
Reckless (M Popsford)	10-1	10-1	8-1	8-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	10-1	10-1	8-1	8-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	10-1	10-1	8-1	8-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	10-1	10-1	8-1	8-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	10-1	10-1	8-1	8-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	10-1	10-1	8-1	8-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	10-1	10-1	8-1	8-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	10-1	10-1	8-1	8-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	10-1	10-1	8-1	8-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	10-1	10-1	8-1	8-1

Each-way a quarter the odds, places, 1, 2, 3 (Cheltenham, Thursday, 18 March)

1998 Champion Hurdle (2m 10yds)				
Horse (Trainer)	Conal	William Hill	Ladbrokes	Total
Reckless (M Popsford)	11-2	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	11-2	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	11-2	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	11-2	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	11-2	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	11-2	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	11-2	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	11-2	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	11-2	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	11-2	5-1	5-1	5-1

Each-way a quarter the odds, places, 1, 2, 3 (Cheltenham, Tuesday, 17 March)

1998 Cheltenham Gold Cup Chase (3m 2f 10yds)				
Horse (Trainer)	Conal	William Hill	Ladbrokes	Total
Reckless (M Popsford)	5-1	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	5-1	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	5-1	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	5-1	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	5-1	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	5-1	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	5-1	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	5-1	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	5-1	5-1	5-1	5-1
Reckless (M Popsford)	5-1	5-1	5-1	5-1

Each-way a quarter the odds, places, 1, 2, 3 (Cheltenham, Thursday, 18 March)

RESULTS

NEWCASTLE

12.40: 1. NOBLE NORMAN (P Mervin) 65-1; 2. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 3. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 4. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 5. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 6. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 7. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 8. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 9. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 10. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 11. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 12. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 13. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 14. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 15. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 16. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 17. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 18. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 19. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 20. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 21. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 22. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 23. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 24. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 25. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 26. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 27. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 28. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 29. Noble Norman (P Mervin) 65-1; 30. 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